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RUSSIA.

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BY

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PREFACE.

In March, 1870, I arrived for the first time in St. Petersburg. My intention was to spend merely a few months in Russia, but I unexpectedly found so many interesting subjects of study that I remained for nearly six years—till December, 1875. During that period my winters were spent for the most part in St. Petersburg, Moscow, and Yaroslaff, whilst the summer months were generally devoted to wandering about the country and collecting information from the local authorities, landed proprietors, merchants, priests, and peasantry. Since my return to England I have kept up a constant correspondence with numerous Russian friends, so that I have been able to follow closely what has taken place in the short interval.

Of the large mass of materials concerning the past history and present condition of the country, which accumulated in my hands during these six years, I have used in the present work merely those which seemed most likely to interest the general public.

Special investigations regarding the Rural Commune, various systems of Agriculture, the History of the Emancipation, the present economic condition of the Peasantry, the Financial System, Public Instruction, recent Intellectual Movements, and similar topics, I reserve for a future volume.

If the work has any merits they are to be attributed mainly to the assistance which was most liberally afforded me by Russians of all classes. Were I to give a list of those to whom I am indebted, it would fill many pages. I must, therefore, restrict myself to naming a few to whom I am under special obligations. Much valuable service was rendered to me by Mr. Kapoustine, the learned and able Director of the School of Law in Yaroslaff, by Mr. Bolkashin, and by the other gentlemen connected with that admirable institution; also by Mr. Tchaslavski, my travelling companion during two summers; by Mr. A. N. Gontcharoff, who accompanied me in my journeys in the province of Samara; and by the late Mr. Edward J. Morgan, well known to Englishmen who have visited St. Petersburg. I have likewise to express respectfully my gratitude to Madame de Novikoff, *née* de Kiréeff, for assisting me in my efforts to reach the best living sources of information,

and to Mr. E. I. Yakushkin, for placing at my disposal his vast stores of information regarding the Russian peasantry. Of the late Mr. N. A. Milútine, the late Mr. Samárin, Prince Tcherkassky, and Mr. Kosheléf, who aided me in my studies on the Emancipation, I have spoken in the chapter on that subject. The other Russians who helped me to procure materials and showed me all manner of kindness I must thank collectively. Very many of the views and opinions of these friends and acquaintances I have been obliged to reject, but I have never done so without first giving them careful consideration, and I have always striven to form my judgments in an unbiassed and impartial spirit.

In conclusion I have to put in a plea for the "Gentle Reader's" indulgence. The subject is so vast and so varied that it is no easy matter to select the topics which have most real importance, and to present them in such a manner as to convey a general idea of the country and the people. A few of the omissions I hope to fill up some time in the not very distant future.

January 1st, 1877.

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RUSSIA.

CHAPTER I.

TRAVELLING IN RUSSIA.

Railways—State Interference—River Communications—Russian "Grand Tour"—The Volga—Kazan—Zhigulinskiya Gori—Finns and Tartars—The Don—Difficulties of Navigation—Discomforts—Rats—Hotels—Peculiar Customs—Roads—Hibernian Phraseology explained—Bridges—Posting—A Tarantass—Requisites for Travelling—Travelling in Winter—Frostbitten—Disagreeable Episodes—Scene at a Post-Station.

Of course travelling in Russia is no longer what it was. During the last quarter of a century a vast network of railways has been constructed, and one can now travel in a comfortable first-class carriage from Berlin to St. Petersburg or Moscow, and thence to Odessa, Sebastopol, the lower Volga, or even the foot of the Caucasus; and, on the whole, it must be admitted that the railways are tolerably comfortable. The carriages are decidedly better than in England, and in winter they are kept warm by small iron stoves, such as we sometimes see in steamers, assisted by double windows and double doors—a very necessary precaution in a land where the thermometer often descends to 30° below zero. The trains never attain, it is true, a high rate of speed—so at least

English and Americans think—but then we must remember that Russians are rarely in a hurry, and like to have frequent opportunities of eating and drinking. In Russia time is *not* money; if it were, nearly all the subjects of the Tsar would always have a large stock of ready money on hand, and would often have great difficulty in spending it. In reality, be it parenthetically remarked, a Russian with a superabundance of ready money is a phenomenon rarely met with in real life.

In conveying passengers at the rate of from fifteen to thirty miles an hour, the railway companies do at least all that they promise; but in one very important respect they do not always strictly fulfil their engagements. The traveller takes a ticket for a certain town, and on arriving at what he imagines to be his destination, he may find merely a railway-station surrounded by fields. On making inquiries, he finds, to his disappointment, that the station is by no means identical with the town bearing the same name, and that the railway has fallen several miles short of fulfilling the bargain, as he understood the terms of the contract. Indeed, it might almost be said that as a general rule railways in Russia, like camel-drivers in certain Eastern countries, studiously avoid the towns. This seems at first a strange fact. It is possible to conceive that the Bedouin is so enamoured of tent life and nomadic habits, that he shuns a town as he would a man-trap; but surely civil engineers and railway contractors have no such dread of brick and mortar. The true reason, I suspect, is

that land within or immediately without the municipal barrier is relatively dear, and that the railways, being completely beyond the invigorating influence of healthy competition, can afford to look upon the comfort and convenience of passengers as a secondary consideration.

It is but fair to state that in one celebrated instance neither engineers nor railway contractors were to blame. From St. Petersburg to Moscow the locomotive runs for a distance of 400 miles, almost as "the crow" is supposed to fly, turning neither to the right hand nor to the left. For fifteen weary hours the passenger in the express train looks out on forest and morass, and rarely catches sight of human habitation. Only once he perceives in the distance what may be called a town; it is Tver which has been thus favoured, not because it is a place of importance, but simply because it happened to be near the straight line. And why was the railway constructed in this extraordinary fashion? For the best of all reasons—because the Tsar so ordered it. When the preliminary survey was being made, Nicholas learned that the officers entrusted with the task—and the Minister of Ways and Roads in the number—were being influenced more by personal than technical considerations, and he determined to cut the Gordian knot in true Imperial style. When the Minister laid before him the map with the intention of explaining the proposed route, he took a ruler, drew a straight line from the one terminus to the other, and remarked in a tone that precluded all discussion,

"You will construct the line so!" And the line was so constructed—remaining to all future ages, like St. Petersburg and the Pyramids, a magnificent monument of autocratic power.

Formerly this well-known incident was often cited in whispered philippics to illustrate the evils of the autocratic form of government. Imperial whims, it was said, over-ride grave economic considerations. In recent years, however, a change seems to have taken place in public opinion, and some people now venture to assert that this so-called Imperial whim was an act of far-seeing policy. As by far the greater part of the goods and passengers are carried the whole length of the line, it is well that the line should be as short as possible, and that branch lines should be constructed to the towns lying to the right and left. Apart from political considerations, it must be admitted that a good deal may be said in support of this view.

In the development of the railway system there has been another disturbing cause, which is not likely to occur to the English mind. In England, individuals and companies habitually act according to their private interests, and the State interferes as little as possible; private initiative acts as it pleases, unless the authorities can prove that important bad consequences will necessarily result. In Russia, the *onus probandi* lies on the other side; private initiative is allowed to do nothing until it gives guarantees against all possible bad consequences. When any great enterprise is projected, the first question is—"How will this new

scheme affect the interests of the State?" Thus, when the course of a new railway has to be determined, the military authorities are always consulted, and their opinion has a great influence on the ultimate decision. The consequence of this is that the railway-map of Russia presents to the eye of the tactician much that is quite unintelligible to the ordinary observer—a fact that will become apparent to the uninitiated as soon as a war breaks out in Eastern Europe. Russia is no longer what she was in the days of the Crimean War, when troops and stores had to be conveyed hundreds of miles by the most primitive means of transport. At that time she had only about 750 miles of railway; now she has more than 11,000 miles, and every year new lines are constructed.

The water-communication has likewise in recent years been greatly improved. On all the principal rivers there are now tolerably good steamers. Unfortunately, the climate puts serious obstructions in the way of navigation. For nearly half of the year the rivers are covered with ice, and during a great part of the open season navigation is difficult. When the ice and snow melt, the rivers overflow their banks and lay a great part of the low-lying country under water, so that many villages can only be approached in boats; but very soon the flood subsides, and the water falls so rapidly, that by midsummer the larger steamers have great difficulty in picking their way among the sand-banks. The Neva alone—that queen of northern rivers—has at all times a plentiful supply of water.

Besides the Neva, the rivers commonly visited by the tourist are the Volga and the Don, which form part of what may be called the Russian grand tour. Englishmen who wish to see something more than St. Petersburg and Moscow generally go by rail to Nizhni-Novgorod, where they visit the great fair, and then get on board one of the Volga steamers. For those who have mastered the important fact that there is no fine scenery in Russia, the voyage down the river is pleasant enough. The left bank is as flat as the banks of the Rhine below Cologne, but the right bank is high, occasionally well wooded, and not devoid of a certain tame picturesqueness. Early on the second day the steamer reaches Kazan, once the capital of an independent Tartar khanate, and still containing a considerable Tartar population. Several "metchets" (as the Mahometan houses of prayer are here termed) with their diminutive minarets in the lower part of the town, show that Islamism still survives, though the khanate was annexed to Muscovy more than three centuries ago; but the town, as a whole, has a European rather than an Asiatic character. If any one visits it in the hope of getting "a glimpse of the East," he will be grievously disappointed, unless, indeed, he happen to be one of those imaginative tourists who always discover what they wish to see, especially when it can be made the subject of an effective chapter in their "Impressions de Voyage." And yet it must be admitted that, of all the towns on the route, Kazan is the most interesting. Though not Oriental, it has a peculiar character of its

own, whilst all the others—Simbirsk, Samara, Saratof—are as uninteresting as Russian provincial towns commonly are. The full force and solemnity of that expression will be explained in the sequel.

Probably about sunrise on the third day something like a range of mountains will appear on the horizon. It may be well to say at once, to prevent disappointment, that in reality nothing worthy of the name of mountain is to be found in that part of the country. The nearest mountain-range in that direction is the Caucasus, which is several hundred miles distant, and consequently cannot by any possibility be seen from the deck of a steamer. The elevations in question are simply a low range of hills, called the Zhigulinskiya Gori. In Western Europe they would not attract much attention, but "in the kingdom of the blind," as the French proverb has it, "the one-eyed man is king;" and in a flat region like Eastern Russia these hills form a prominent feature. Though they have nothing of Alpine grandeur, yet their well-wooded slopes, coming down to the water's edge—especially when covered with the delicate tints of early spring, or the rich yellow and red of autumnal foliage—leave an impression on the memory not easily effaced.

On the whole—with all due deference to the opinions of my patriotic Russian friends—I must say that Volga scenery does not repay the time, trouble, and expense which a voyage from Nizhni to Tsaritsin demands. There are some pretty bits here and there, but they are "few and far between." A glass of the most exquisite

wine diluted with twenty gallons of water makes a very insipid beverage. The deck of the steamer is generally much more interesting than the banks of the river. There one meets with curious travelling companions. The majority of the passengers are probably Russian peasants, who are always ready to chat freely without demanding a formal introduction, and to relate to a new acquaintance the simple story of their lives. Often I have thus whiled away the weary hours both pleasantly and profitably, and have always been impressed with the peasant's homely common sense, good-natured kindliness, half-fatalistic resignation, and strong desire to learn something about foreign countries. This last peculiarity makes him question as well as communicate, and his questions, though sometimes apparently childish, are generally to the point. Among the passengers are probably also some representatives of the various Finnish tribes inhabiting this part of the country; they may be interesting to the ethnologist who loves to study physiognomy, but they are far less sociable than the Russians. Nature seems to have made them silent and morose, whilst their conditions of life have made them shy and distrustful. The Tartar, on the other hand, is almost sure to be a lively and amusing companion. Most probably he is a pedler or small trader of some kind. The bundle on which he reclines contains his stock-in-trade, composed, perhaps, of cotton printed goods and bright-coloured cotton handkerchiefs. He himself is enveloped in a capacious greasy *khalat*, or dressing-gown, and wears a fur cap, though the

thermometer may be at 90° in the shade. The roguish twinkle in his small piercing eyes contrasts strongly with the sombre, stolid expression of the Finnish peasants sitting near him. He has much to relate about St. Petersburg, Moscow, and perhaps Astrakhan; but, like a genuine trader, he is very reticent regarding the mysteries of his own craft. Towards sunset he retires with his companions to some quiet spot on the deck to recite the evening prayers. Here all the good Mahometans on board assemble and stroke their beards, kneel on their little strips of carpet and prostrate themselves, all keeping time as if they were performing some new kind of drill under the eye of a severe drill-sergeant.

If the voyage is made about the end of September, when the traders are returning home from the fair at Nizhni-Novgorod, the ethnologist will have a still better opportunity of study. He will then find not only representatives of the Finnish and Tartar races, but also Armenians, Circassians, Persians, Bokhariots, and other Orientals—a motley and picturesque but decidedly unsavoury cargo.

However great the ethnographical variety on board may be, the traveller will probably find that four days on the Volga are quite enough for all practical and æsthetic purposes, and instead of going on to Astrakhan he will quit the steamer at Tsaritsin. Here he will find a railway of about fifty miles in length, connecting the Volga with the Don. I say advisedly a railway, and not a train, for there are only two trains a week, so that if you lose one train you have to wait about three days

for the next. Prudent, nervous people prefer travelling by the road; and they do well, for this line has, I believe, the undisputed honour of being the most infamous in Europe. But perhaps, after all, we ought to apply here the principle that all things are less dreadful than they seem. The strange jolts and mysterious noises may naturally alarm a person of nervous temperament, but a man of ordinary nerve can easily preserve his equanimity, for the pace is so slow that running off the rails would be merely an amusing episode, and even a collision could scarcely be attended with serious consequences.

Some time after the arrival of the bi-weekly train at Kalatch, a steamer starts for Rostoff, which is situated near the mouth of the river. The navigation of the Don is much more difficult than that of the Volga. The river is extremely shallow, and the sand-banks are continually shifting, so that many times in the course of the day the steamer runs aground. Sometimes she is got off by simply reversing the engines, but not unfrequently she sticks so fast that the engines have to be assisted. This is effected in a curious way. The captain always gives a number of stalwart Cossacks a free passage on condition that they will give him the assistance he requires; and as soon as the ship sticks fast, he orders them to jump overboard with a stout hawser and haul her off. The task is not a pleasant one, especially as the poor fellows cannot afterwards change their clothes; but the order is always obeyed with alacrity and without grumbling. Cossacks, it would seem, have no personal acquaintance with colds and rheumatism.

In the most approved manuals of geography the Don figures as one of the principal European rivers; and its length and breadth give it a right to be considered as such, but its depth in many parts is ludicrously out of proportion to its length and breadth. I remember one day seeing the captain of a large, flat-bottomed steamer slacken speed, to avoid running down a man on horseback who was attempting to cross his bows in the middle of the stream. Another day a not less characteristic incident happened. A Cossack passenger wished to be set down at a place where there was no pier, and on being informed that there was no means of landing him, coolly jumped overboard and walked ashore. This simple method of disembarking cannot, of course, be recommended to those who have no special local knowledge regarding the exact position of sand-banks and deep pools.

Good serviceable fellows are those Cossacks who drag the steamer off the sand-banks, and well do they deserve a free passage. Both they and their richer companions who can afford to pay for tickets are agreeable, interesting fellow-travellers. Many of them can relate from their own experience, in plain, unvarnished style, stirring episodes of irregular warfare; and some of the older men amongst them can add curious unpublished incidents of the Crimean War. If they happen to be in a very communicative mood they may divulge a few secrets regarding their simple, primitive commissariat system—of which I shall have occasion to speak hereafter. Whether they are confidential or not, the

traveller who knows the language will spend his time more profitably and pleasantly in chatting with them than in gazing listlessly at the uninteresting country through which he is passing.

Unfortunately, these Don steamers carry a large number of free passengers of another and more objectionable kind, who do not confine themselves to the deck, but unceremoniously find their way into the cabin, and prevent thin-skinned travellers from sleeping. I know too little of Natural history to decide whether these agile, bloodthirsty parasites are of the same species as those which in England assist unofficially the Sanitary Commissioners by punishing uncleanliness, but I may say that their function in the system of created things is essentially the same, and they fulfil it with a zeal and energy beyond all praise. Possessing for my own part a happy immunity from their indelicate attentions, and being perfectly innocent of entomological curiosity, I might, had I been alone, have overlooked their existence, but I was constantly reminded of their presence by less happily constituted mortals, and the complaints of the sufferers received a curious official confirmation. On arriving at the end of the journey, I asked permission to spend the night on board, and I noticed that the captain acceded to my request with a readiness and warmth not quite in keeping with his ordinary demeanour. Next morning the fact was fully explained. When I began to express my thanks for having been allowed to pass the night in a comfortable cabin, my host interrupted me with a good-natured laugh, and assured me that, on

the contrary, he was under obligations to me. "You see," he said, assuming an air of mock gravity, "I have always on board a large body of light cavalry, and when I sleep alone in the cabin they make a combined attack on me; whereas, when some one shares the cabin with me, they always divide their forces. So, you see, you have unconsciously performed an heroic act, and laid me under a deep obligation." If this was, as I half suspected, merely an ingenious way of concealing hospitality, it must be admitted that it was *ben trovato* —a piece of elaborate politeness to be expected from a Spanish hidalgo rather than from the captain of a Don steamer.

On certain steamers on the Sea of Azof the privacy of the sleeping-cabin is disturbed by still more objectionable intruders; I mean rats. During one short voyage which I made on board the *Kertch*, these disagreeable visitors became so importunate in the lower regions of the vessel that the ladies obtained permission to sleep in the deck-saloon. After this arrangement had been made, we unfortunate male passengers received redoubled attention from our tormentors. Awakened early one morning by the sensation of something running over me as I lay in my berth, I conceived a method of retaliation. It seemed to me possible that, in the event of another visit, I might, by seizing the proper moment, kick the rat up to the ceiling with such force as to produce concussion of the brain and instant death. Very soon I had an opportunity of putting my plan into execution. A significant shaking of the little curtain at

the foot of the berth showed that it was being used as a scaling-ladder. I lay perfectly still, quite as much interested in the sport as if I had been waiting, rifle in hand, for big game. As if cognisant of my plan, and anxious to play creditably his part in the experiment, the rat stepped into my berth and took up his position on my foot. In an instant he was shot upwards. First was heard a sharp knock on the ceiling, and then a dull "thudd" on the floor. The precise extent of the injuries inflicted I never discovered, for the victim had sufficient strength and presence of mind to effect his escape; and the gentleman at the other side of the cabin, who had been roused by the noise, protested against my repeating the experiment, on the ground that, though he was willing to take his own share of the intruders, he strongly objected to having other people's rats kicked into his berth.

On such occasions it is of no use to complain to the authorities. When I met the captain on deck I related to him what had happened, and protested vigorously against passengers being exposed to such annoyances. After listening to me patiently, he coolly replied, entirely overlooking my protestations, "Ah! I did better than that this morning; I allowed my rat to get under the blanket, and then smothered him!"

Railways and steamboats, even when their arrangements leave much to be desired, invariably effect a salutary revolution in hotel accommodation; but this revolution is of necessity gradual. Foreign hotel-keepers must immigrate and give the example; suitable houses

must be built; servants must be properly trained; and, above all, the native travellers must learn the usages of civilised society. In Russia this revolution is only in progress, and is as yet by no means complete. The cities where foreigners most do congregate—St. Petersburg, Moscow, Odessa—already possess hotels that will bear comparison with those of Western Europe, and some of the more important provincial towns can offer very respectable accommodation; but there is still much to be done before the West-European can travel with comfort even on the principal routes. Cleanliness, the first and most essential element of comfort, as we understand the term, is still a rare commodity, and often cannot be procured at any price.

Even in good hotels, when they are of the genuine Russian type, there are certain peculiarities which, though not in themselves objectionable, strike a foreigner as peculiar. Thus, when you alight at such an hotel, you are expected to examine a considerable number of rooms, and to inquire about the respective prices. When you have fixed upon a suitable apartment, you will do well, if you wish to practise economy, to propose to the landlord considerably less than he demands; and you will generally find, if you have a talent for bargaining, that the rooms may be hired for somewhat less than the sum first stated. You must be careful, however, to leave no possibility of doubt as to the terms of the contract. Perhaps you assume that, as in taking a cab a horse is always supplied without special stipulation, so in hiring a bedroom the bargain includes a bed

and the necessary appurtenances. Such an assumption will not always be justified. The landlord may perhaps give you a bedstead without extra charge, but if he be uncorrupted by foreign notions, he will certainly not spontaneously supply you with bed-linen, pillows, blankets, and towels. On the contrary, he will assume that you carry all these articles with you, and if you do not, you must pay for those which you borrow from him.

This ancient custom has produced among certain Russians a curious kind of fastidiousness to which we are strangers. They strongly dislike using sheets, blankets, and towels which are in a certain sense public property, just as we should strongly object to putting on clothes which had been already worn by other people. And the feeling may be developed in people not Russian by birth. For my own part, I confess to having been conscious of a certain disagreeable feeling on returning in this respect to the usages of so-called civilised Europe. Evidently fastidiousness is not an innate quality, but the result of the conditions to which we have been accustomed; and, as such, it may easily take very curious forms.

The inconvenience of carrying about these essential articles of bedroom furniture is by no means so great as may at first sight be supposed. Bedrooms in Russia are always heated during cold weather, so that one light blanket, which may be used also as a railway rug, is quite sufficient, whilst sheets, pillow-cases, and towels take up very little space in a portmanteau. The

most cumbrous object is the pillow, for air-cushions, having always a disagreeable odour, are not well suited for the purpose. But Russians are accustomed to this encumbrance. In former days—as at the present time in those parts of the country where there are neither railways nor macadamised roads—people travelled in carts or carriages without springs, and in these instruments of torture a huge pile of cushions or pillows is necessary to avoid contusions and dislocations. On the railways—except perhaps the infamous line which connects the Volga with the Don—the jolts and shaking are not deadly enough to require such an antidote; but, even in unconservative Russia, customs outlive the conditions that created them; and at every railway-station you may see men and women carrying about their pillows with them as we carry wraps and hat-boxes. A genuine Russian merchant who loves comfort and respects tradition may travel without a portmanteau, but he considers his pillow as an indispensable *article de voyage*.

To return to the hotel. When you have completed the negotiations with the landlord, you will notice that, unless you have a servant with you, the waiter prepares to perform the duties of *valet de chambre*. Do not be surprised at his officiousness, which seems founded on the assumption that you are three-fourths paralysed. Formerly, every well-born Russian had a valet always in attendance, and never dreamed of doing for himself anything which could by any possibility be done for him. You notice that there is no bell in the room, and no

mechanical means of communicating with the world below stairs. That is because the attendant was supposed to be always within call, and it is so much easier to shout than to get up and ring the bell. In the good old times all this was quite natural. The well-born Russian had commonly a superabundance of domestic serfs, and there was no reason why one or two of them should not accompany their master when his Honour undertook a journey. An additional person in the Tarantass did not increase the expense, and considerably diminished the little unavoidable inconveniences of travel. But times have changed. Fifteen years ago the domestic serfs were emancipated by Imperial Ukaz. Free servants demand wages; and on railways or steamers a single ticket does not include an attendant. The present generation must therefore get through life with a more modest supply of valets, and must learn to do with its own hands much that was formerly performed by serf labour. Still, a gentleman brought up in other conditions cannot be expected to dress himself without assistance, and accordingly the waiter remains in your room to act as valet. Perhaps, too, in the early morning you may learn in an unpleasant way that other parts of the old system are not yet extinct. You may hear, for instance, resounding along the corridors such an order as—"Petrusha! Petrusha!! Stakan vody!!!" ("Little Peter, little Peter, a glass of water!") shouted in a stentorian voice that would startle the Seven Sleepers.

When the toilet operations are completed, and you

order tea—one always orders tea in Russia—you will be asked whether you have your own tea and sugar with you. If you are an experienced traveller you will be able to reply in the affirmative, for good tea can be bought only in certain well-known shops, and can never be found in hotels. A huge, steaming tea-urn, called a "Samovar"—etymologically, a "self-boiler"—will be brought in, and you will make your tea according to your taste. The tumbler, you know of course, is to be used as a cup, and when filled may be conveniently employed for cauterising the points of your fingers. If you should happen to have anything eatable or drinkable in your travelling-basket, you need not hesitate to take it out at once, for the waiter will not feel at all aggrieved or astonished at your doing nothing "for the good of the house." The twenty or twenty-five *kopeks* that you pay for the Samovar—tea-pot, tumbler, saucer, spoon, and slop-basin being included under the generic term "Pribór"—frees you from all corkage and other dues.

These and similar remnants of old customs are now rapidly disappearing, and will, doubtless, in a very few years be things of the past—things to be picked up in out-of-the-way corners, and chronicled by social archæology; but they are still to be found in the best hotels in towns not unknown to Western Europe.

Many of these old customs, and especially the old method of travelling, may still be studied in all their pristine purity throughout a great part of the country. Though railway construction has been pushed forward with great energy during the last twenty years, the fire-

horse has not yet crossed the Ural; and in what may be called Cis-Uralia there are still vast regions—some of them larger than the United Kingdom—where the ancient solitudes have never been disturbed by the shrill whistle of the locomotive, and roads have remained in their primitive condition. Even in the central region one may still travel hundreds of miles without ever encountering anything that recalls the name of Macadam.

If popular rumour is to be trusted, there is somewhere in the Highlands of Scotland, by the side of a turnpike, a large stone bearing the following doggerel inscription :—

> "If you had seen this road before it was made,
> You'd lift up your hands and bless General Wade."

Any educated Englishman reading this strange announcement would naturally remark that the expression, "a road before it is made," is a logical contradiction probably of Hibernian origin; but I have often thought, during my wanderings in Russia, that the expression, if not logically justifiable, might for the sake of vulgar convenience be legalised by a Permissive Bill. The truth is that, as a Frenchman might say, "there are roads and roads"—roads made and roads unmade, roads artificial and roads natural. Now, in Russia, roads are nearly all of the unmade, natural kind, and are so conservative in their nature that they have at the present day precisely the same appearance as they had many centuries ago. They have thus for imaginative minds something of what is called "the charm of historical association." The only

perceptible change that takes place in them during a series of generations is that the ruts shift their position. When these become so deep that fore-wheels can no longer fathom them, it becomes necessary to begin making a new pair of ruts to the right or left of the old ones; and as the roads are commonly of gigantic breadth, there is no difficulty in finding a place for the operation. How the old ones get filled up I cannot explain; but as I have never seen in any part of the country a human being engaged in road-repairing, I assume that beneficent Nature somehow accomplishes the task without human assistance, either by means of alluvial deposits, or by some other cosmical action best known to physical geographers.

On the roads one occasionally encounters bridges; and here, again, I have discovered in Russia a key to the mysteries of Hibernian phraseology. Some years ago an Irish member declared to the House of Commons that the Church was "the bridge that separated the two great sections of the Irish people." As bridges commonly connect rather than separate, the metaphor was received with roars of laughter. If the honourable members who joined in the hilarious applause had travelled much in Russia, they would have been more moderate in their merriment; for in that country bridges often act as a barrier rather than a connecting link, and to cross a river by a bridge is often what is termed in popular phrase "a tempting of Providence." The cautious driver will generally prefer to take to the water, if there is a ford within a reasonable distance, though both he

and his human load may be obliged, in order to avoid getting wet feet, to assume undignified postures that would afford admirable material for the caricaturist. But this little bit of discomfort, even though the luggage should be soaked in the process of fording, is as nothing compared to the danger of crossing by the bridge. As I have no desire to harrow unnecessarily the feelings of the reader, I refrain from all description of ugly accidents, ending in bruises and fractures, and shall simply describe in a few words how a successful passage is effected.

When it is possible to approach the bridge without sinking up to the knees in mud, it is better to avoid all risks by walking over and waiting for the vehicle on the other side; and when this is impossible, a preliminary survey is advisable. To your inquiries whether it is safe, your Yemstchik (post-boy) is sure to reply, "Nitchevo!"—a word which, according to the dictionaries, means "nothing," but which has, in the mouths of the peasantry, a great variety of meanings, as I may explain at some future time. In the present case it may be roughly translated, "There is no danger." "Nitchevo, Barin, proyédem" ("There is no danger, sir; we shall get over"), he repeats. You may refer to the generally rotten appearance of the structure, and point in particular to the great holes sufficient to engulf half a post-horse. "Ne bos', Bog pomozhet" ("Do not fear, God will help"), replies coolly your phlegmatic Jehu. You may have your doubts as to whether in this irreligious age Providence will intervene specially for your benefit; but your Yemstchik, who has more faith

or fatalism, leaves you little time to solve the problem. Making hurriedly the sign of the cross, he gathers up his reins, waves his little whip in the air, and, shouting lustily, urges on his team. The operation is not wanting in excitement. First there is a short descent; then the horses plunge wildly through a zone of deep mud; next comes a fearful jolt, as the vehicle is jerked up on to the first planks; then the transverse planks, which are but loosely held in their places, rattle and rumble ominously, as the experienced, sagacious animals pick their way cautiously and gingerly among the dangerous holes and crevices; lastly, you plunge with a horrible jolt into a second mud zone, and finally regain *terra firma*, conscious of that pleasant sensation which a young officer may be supposed to feel after his first cavalry charge in real warfare.

Of course here, as elsewhere, familiarity breeds indifference. When you have successfully crossed without serious accident a few hundred bridges of this kind, you learn to be as cool and fatalistic as your Yemstchik.

The reader who has heard of the gigantic reforms that have been recently effected in Russia, may naturally be astonished to learn that the roads are still in such a disgraceful condition. But for this, as for everything else in the world, there is a good and sufficient reason. The country is still, comparatively speaking, thinly populated, and in many regions it is difficult, or practically impossible, to procure in sufficient quantity stone of any kind, and especially hard stone fit for road-making. Besides this, when roads are made, the severity

of the climate renders it difficult to keep them in good repair.

When a long journey has to be undertaken through a region in which there are no railways, there are several ways in which it may be effected. In former days, when time was of still less value than at present, many landed proprietors travelled with their own horses, and carried with them, in one or more capacious, lumbering vehicles, all that was required for the degree of civilisation which they had attained; and their requirements were often considerable. The *grand seigneur*, for instance, who spent the greater part of his life amidst the luxury of the court society, naturally took with him all the portable elements of civilisation. His baggage included, therefore, camp-beds, table-linen, silver plate, a *batterie de cuisine*, and a French cook. The pioneers and part of the commissariat force were always sent on in advance, so that his Excellency found at each halting-place everything prepared for his arrival. The poor owner of a few dozen serfs dispensed, of course, with the elaborate commissariat department, and contented himself with such modest fare as could be packed in the holes and corners of a single Tarantass.

It will be well to explain here, parenthetically, what a Tarantass is, for I shall often have occasion to use the word. It may be briefly defined as a phaeton without springs. The function of springs is imperfectly fulfilled by two parallel wooden bars, placed longitudinally, on which is fixed the body of the vehicle. It is commonly drawn by three horses—a strong, fast trotter in the

shafts, flanked on each side by a light, loosely-attached horse that goes along at a gallop. The points of the shafts are connected by the "Duga," which looks like a gigantic, badly-formed horseshoe rising high above the collar of the trotter. To the top of the Duga is attached the bearing-rein, and underneath the highest part of it is fastened a big bell—in the southern provinces I found two, and sometimes even three bells—which may often be distinctly heard a mile off. The use of the bell is variously explained. Some say it is in order to frighten the wolves, and others that it is to avoid collisions on the narrow forest-paths. But neither of these explanations is entirely satisfactory. It is used chiefly in summer, when there is no danger of an attack from wolves; and the number of bells is greater in the south, where there are no forests. Perhaps the original intention was—I throw out the hint for the benefit of a certain school of archæologists—to frighten away evil spirits; and the practice has been retained partly from unreasoning conservatism, and partly with a view to lessen the chances of collisions. As the roads are noiselessly soft, and the drivers not always vigilant, the dangers of collision are considerably diminished by the ceaseless peal. Altogether, the Tarantass is well adapted to the conditions in which it is used. By the curious way in which the horses are harnessed it recalls the war-chariot of ancient times. The horse in the shafts is compelled by the bearing-rein to keep his head high and straight before him—though the movement of his ears shows plainly that he would very much like to put it some-

where further away from the tongue of the bell—but the side horses gallop freely, turning their heads outwards in classical fashion. I believe that this position is assumed not from any sympathy on the part of these animals for the remains of classical art, but rather from the natural desire to keep a sharp eye on the driver. Every movement of his right hand they watch with close attention, and as soon as they discover any symptoms indicating an intention of using the whip, they immediately show a desire to quicken the pace.

Now that the reader has gained some idea of what a Tarantass is, we may return to the modes of travelling through the regions which are not yet supplied with railways.

However enduring and long-winded horses may be, they must be allowed sometimes, during a long journey, to rest and feed. Travelling with one's own horses is therefore necessarily a slow operation, and is already antiquated. People who value their time prefer to make use of the Imperial Post-organisation. On all the principal lines of communication there are regular post-stations, at from ten to twenty miles apart, where a certain number of horses and vehicles are kept for the convenience of travellers. To enjoy the privileges of this arrangement, one has to apply to the proper authorities for a "Podorozhnaya"—a large sheet of paper stamped with the Imperial Eagle, and bearing the name of the recipient, the destination, and the number of horses to be supplied. In return for this document a small sum is paid for imaginary road-repairs; the rest of

the sum is paid by instalments at the respective stations. Armed with this document, you go to the post-station and demand the requisite number of horses. Three is the number generally used, but if you travel lightly and are indifferent to appearances, you may modestly content yourself with a pair. The vehicle is a kind of Tarantass, but not such as I have just described. The essentials in both are the same, but those which the Imperial Government provides resemble an enormous cradle on wheels, rather than a phaeton. An armful of hay spread over the bottom of the wooden box is supposed to play the part of cushions. You are expected to sit under the arched covering, and extend your legs so that the feet lie beneath the driver's seat; but you will do well, unless the rain happens to be coming down in torrents, to get this covering unshipped, and travel without it. When used, it painfully curtails the little freedom of movement that you enjoy, and when you are shot upwards by some obstruction on the road, it is apt to arrest your ascent by giving you a violent blow on the top of the head.

It is to be hoped that you are in no hurry to start, otherwise your patience may be sorely tried. The horses, when at last produced, may seem to you the most miserable screws that it was ever your misfortune to behold; but you had better refrain from expressing your feelings, for if you use violent, uncomplimentary language, it may turn out that you have been guilty of gross calumny. I have seen many a team composed of animals which a third-class London costermonger would have spurned, and in which it was barely possible to

recognise the equine form, do their duty in highly creditable style, and go along at the rate of twelve or fourteen miles an hour, under no stronger incentive than the voice of the Yemstchik. Indeed, the capabilities of these lean, slouching, ungainly quadrupeds are often astounding when they are under the guidance of a man who knows how to drive them. Though such a man commonly carries a little harmless whip, he rarely uses it except by waving it horizontally in the air. His incitements are all oral. He talks to his cattle as he would to animals of his own species—now encouraging them by tender, caressing epithets, and now launching at them expressions of indignant scorn. At one moment they are his "little doves," and at the next they have been transformed into "cursed hounds." How far they understand and appreciate this curious mixture of endearing cajolery and contemptuous abuse it is difficult to say, but there is no doubt that it somehow has upon them a strange and powerful influence.

Any one who undertakes a journey of this kind should possess a well-knit, muscular frame and good tough sinews, capable of supporting an unlimited amount of jolting and shaking; at the same time, he should be well inured to all the hardships and discomfort incidental to what is vaguely termed "roughing it." When he wishes to sleep in a post-station, he will find nothing softer than a wooden bench, unless he can induce the keeper to put for him on the floor a bundle of hay, which is perhaps softer, but on the whole more disagreeable than the deal board. Sometimes he will not get even the wooden

bench, for in ordinary post-stations there is but one room for travellers, and the two benches—there are rarely more—may be already occupied. When he does obtain a bench, and succeeds in falling asleep, he must not be astonished if he is disturbed once or twice during the night by people who use the apartment as a waiting-room whilst the post-horses are being changed. These passers-by may even order a Samovar, and drink tea, chat, laugh, smoke, and make themselves otherwise disagreeable, utterly regardless of the sleepers. Then there are the other intruders, of which I have already spoken when describing the steamers on the Don. I must apologise to the reader for again introducing this disagreeable subject. Æsthetically it is a mistake, but I have no choice. My object is to describe travelling in Russia as it is, and any description which did not give due prominence to this species of discomfort would be untrue—like a description of Alpine climbing with no mention of glaciers. I shall refrain, however, from all details, and confine myself to a single hint for the benefit of future travellers. As you will have abundant occupation in the work of self-defence, learn to distinguish between belligerents and neutrals, and follow the simple principle of international law, that neutrals should not be molested. They may be very ugly, but ugliness does not justify assassination. If, for instance, you should happen in awaking to notice a few black or brown beetles running about your pillow, restrain your murderous hand! If you kill them you commit an act of unnecessary bloodshed; for though they may

playfully scamper around you, they will do you no bodily harm.

The best lodgings to be found in some of the small provincial towns are much worse than the ordinary post-stations. To describe the filthiness and discomfort of some rooms in which I have had to spend the night, would require a much more powerful pen than mine; and even a powerful writer in entering on that subject would involuntarily make a special invocation for assistance to the Muse of the Naturalistic school.

Another requisite for a journey in unfrequented districts is a knowledge of the language. It is popularly supposed that if you are familiar with French and German, you may travel anywhere in Russia. So far as the great cities and chief lines of communication are concerned, this is true, but beyond that it is a delusion. The Russian has not, any more than the West-European, received from Nature the gift of tongues. Educated Russians often speak one or two foreign languages fluently, but the peasants know no language but their own, and it is with the peasantry that one comes in contact. And to converse freely with the peasant requires a considerable familiarity with the language—far more than is required for simply reading a book. Though there are few provincialisms, and all classes of the people use the same words—except the words of foreign origin, which are used only by the upper classes—the peasant always speaks in a more laconic and more idiomatic way than the educated man.

In the winter months travelling is in some respects

pleasanter than in summer, for snow and frost are great macadamisers. If the snow falls evenly, there is for some time the most delightful road that can be imagined. No jolts, no shaking, but a smooth, gliding motion, like that of a boat in calm water, and the horses gallop along as if totally unconscious of the sledge behind them. Unfortunately, this happy state of things does not last long. The road soon gets cut up, and deep transverse furrows are formed. How these furrows come into existence I have never been able clearly to comprehend, though I have often heard the phenomenon explained by men who imagined they understood it. Whatever the cause and mode of formation may be, certain it is that little hills and valleys do get formed, and the sledge, as it crosses over them, bobs up and down like a boat in a chopping sea, with this important difference, that the boat falls into a yielding liquid, whereas the sledge falls upon a solid substance, unyielding and unelastic. The shaking and jolting which result may readily be imagined.

There are other discomforts, too, in winter travelling. So long as the air is perfectly still, the cold may be very intense without being disagreeable; but if a strong head wind is blowing, and the thermometer ever so many degrees below zero, driving in an open sledge is a very disagreeable operation, and noses may get frostbitten without their owners perceiving the fact in time to take preventive measures. Then why not take covered sledges on such occasions? For the simple reason that they are not to be had; and if they could be procured, it

would be well to avoid using them, for they are apt to produce something very like sea-sickness. Besides this, when the sledge gets overturned, it is pleasanter to be shot out on to the clean, refreshing snow than to be buried ignominiously under a pile of miscellaneous baggage.

The chief requisite for winter travelling in these icy regions is a plentiful supply of warm furs. An Englishman is very apt to be imprudent in this respect, and to trust too much to his natural power of resisting cold. To a certain extent this confidence is justifiable, for an Englishman often feels quite comfortable in an ordinary great coat, when his Russian friends consider it necessary to envelope themselves in furs of the warmest kind; but it may be carried too far, in which case severe punishment is sure to follow, as I once learned by experience. I may relate the incident as a warning to others.

One day in the winter of 1870-71 I started from Novgorod, with the intention of visiting some friends at a cavalry barracks situated about ten miles from the town. As the sun was shining brightly, and the distance to be traversed was short, I considered that a light fur and a *bashlyk*—a cloth hood which protects the ears —would be quite sufficient to keep out the cold, and foolishly disregarded the warnings of a Russian friend who happened to call as I was about to start. Our route lay along the river due northward, right in the teeth of a strong north wind. A wintry north wind is always and everywhere a disagreeable enemy to face;

let the reader try to imagine what it is when the Fahrenheit thermometer is at 30° below zero—or rather let him refrain from such an attempt, for the sensation produced cannot be imagined by those who have not experienced it. Of course I ought to have turned back—at least, as soon as a sensation of faintness warned me that the circulation was being seriously impeded—but I did not wish to confess my imprudence to the friend who accompanied me When we had driven about three-fourths of the way, we met a peasant-woman, who gesticulated violently, and shouted something to us as we passed. I did not hear what she said, but my friend turned to me and said in an alarming tone—we had been speaking German—"Mein Gott! Ihre Nase ist abgefrohren!" Now the word "*ab*gefrohren," as the reader will understand, seemed to indicate that my nose was frozen *off*, so I put up my hand in some alarm to discover whether I had inadvertently lost the whole or part of the member referred to. So far from being lost or diminished in size, it was very much larger than usual, and at the same time as hard and insensible as a bit of wood.

"You may still save it," said my companion, "if you get out at once and rub it vigorously with snow."

I got out as directed, but was too faint to do anything vigorously. My fur cloak flew open, the cold seemed to grasp me in the region of the heart, and I fell insensible.

How long I remained unconscious I know not. When I awoke I found myself in a strange room, sur-

rounded by dragoon officers in uniform, and the first words I heard were, "He is out of danger now, but he will have a fever."

These words were spoken, as I afterwards discovered, by a very competent surgeon; but the prophecy was not fulfilled. The promised fever never came. The only bad consequences were that for some days my right hand remained stiff, and during about a fortnight I had to conceal my nose from public view.

If this little incident justifies me in drawing a general conclusion, I should say that exposure to extreme cold is an almost painless form of death, but that the process of being resuscitated is very painful indeed—so painful, that the patient may be excused for momentarily regretting that officious people prevented the temporary insensibility from becoming "the sleep that knows no waking."

Between the alternate reigns of winter and summer there is always a short interregnum, during which travelling in Russia by road is almost impossible. Woe to the ill-fated mortal who has to make a long road-journey immediately after the winter snow has melted; or, worse still, at the beginning of winter, when the autumn mud has been petrified by the frost, and not yet levelled by the snow!

At all seasons the monotony of a journey is pretty sure to be broken by little unforeseen episodes of a more or less disagreeable kind. An axle breaks, or a wheel comes off, or there is a difficulty in procuring horses. As an illustration of the graver episodes which may

occur, I shall make here a quotation from my diary.

Early in the morning we arrived at Maikop, a small town commanding the entrance to one of the valleys which run up towards the main range of the Caucasus. On alighting at the post-station, we at once ordered horses for the next stage, and received the laconic reply, "There are no horses."

"And when will there be some?"

"To-morrow!"

This last reply we took for a piece of playful exaggeration, and demanded the book in which, according to law, the departure of horses is duly inscribed, and from which it is easy to calculate when the first team should be ready to start. A short calculation proved that we ought to get horses by four o'clock in the afternoon, so we showed the station-keeper various documents signed by the Minister of the Interior and other influential personages, and advised him to avoid all contravention of the postal regulations.

These documents, which proved that we enjoyed the special protection of the authorities, had generally been of great service to us in our dealings with rascally station-keepers; but this station-keeper was not one of the ordinary type. He was a Cossack, of herculean proportions, with a great bullet-shaped head, short-cropped bristly hair, shaggy eyebrows, an enormous pendant moustache, a defiant air, and a peculiar expression of countenance which plainly indicated "an ugly customer." Though it was still early in the day, he had evidently

already imbibed a considerable quantity of alcohol, and his whole demeanour showed clearly enough that he was not of those who are "pleasant in their liquor." After glancing superciliously at the documents, as if to intimate he could read them were he so disposed, he threw them down on the table, and, thrusting his gigantic paws into his capacious trouser-pockets, remarked slowly and decisively, in something deeper than a double-bass voice, "You'll have horses to-morrow morning."

My travelling companion was a Russian gentleman of nervous, excitable temperament, who could handle with great dexterity that vocabulary of vituperation in which his native tongue is peculiarly rich; and our tormentor was a man who might have tried severely the patience of a Stoic philosopher. The scene which naturally ensued I leave to the reader's imagination. Though my companion behaved, as the post-boys graphically described it, "like a General," his words had no practical result; and we at last decided to content ourselves with making an entry in the Complaint Book, and hiring horses elsewhere.

When we imagined that we had overcome all obstacles, and were about to start, we encountered new and unexpected difficulties. As soon as Hercules perceived that we had obtained horses without his assistance, he offered us one of his own teams, and refused to allow us to depart unless we consented to cancel the complaint which we had entered against him. This we declined to do, and the wordy warfare began afresh with redoubled fury.

Perceiving that at any moment words might give place to something more deadly, I took my friend aside, and tried to convince him that prudence was the better part of valour. I represented to him that a revolver should never be used except in the direst necessity, and that in the present case a hand-to-hand fight should be by all means avoided. Our opponent, I said, was evidently no pugilist, and knew nothing of "striking straight from the shoulder"—for this latter expression I could find no Russian equivalent, and had to supply the deficiency by pantomime—so that if he had been a man of ordinary proportions, a few rounds might have been a pleasant amusement; but under the circumstances either of us would look like David in the presence of Goliath. In a small room Goliath could easily close with his antagonist, and then would inevitably happen something which would give rise to a judicial investigation, and end in a verdict of "Instantaneous death through violent compression." Besides this, our enemy had at his disposal a legion of post-boys and strappers, and could accordingly overwhelm us with numbers. Plainly we were the weaker party, and therefore would do well to show ourselves law-loving respecters of the national institutions. In accordance with these considerations, we determined to apply to the chief of rural police, who was at that moment in the town.

It was arranged that my friend should mount guard over the baggage, whilst I went in search of the police officer. As I was about to start, my friend suggested that I should leave with him my revolver. To this I objected,

for I feared that he might, in his excitement, make an imprudent use of it; but he assured me that he would avoid all quarrelling till my return; and I acceded to his request. Very soon I had reason to regret this step. On returning from my errand, I found a crowd round the post-station, and a general hubbub, that indicated only too plainly that the decisive action was going on, or had been fought in my absence. Fearing the worst, I rushed into the room. The smoke and the smell of gunpowder showed that the artillery had been used, but there was now a deathlike silence. When my eyes had become a little accustomed to the smoky darkness, I could perceive a confused heap of furniture and baggage on the floor, but happily there was no human form among the *débris*. In the one corner stood Goliath, with two companions at his side, and in the other stood my friend, disarmed. Evidently for the moment there was an armistice.

In a few minutes all the authorities in the place had assembled. The table had been set on its legs, a candle had been lit, two armed Cossacks stood as sentries at the door, and the preliminary investigation had commenced. The chief of the police sat at the table, and wrote rapidly on a sheet of foolscap paper. The investigation showed that two shots had been fired from my revolver, and two bullets were found deeply imbedded in the wall. All those who had been present at the scuffle, and many more who knew nothing about it except by hearsay, were duly examined, and a good deal of informal mutual recrimination was exchanged. More than once the ominous words, "pokushenié na ubiistvo" ("attempt

to murder"), were pronounced, and my friend was assumed to be the assailant, in spite of his protestations to the contrary. Things looked very black indeed. We had the prospect of being detained in this miserable place for days and weeks, till the insatiable demon of official formality had been fully propitiated. And then? —I did not like to think of that question.

When things were thus at their blackest they suddenly took a most unexpected turn, and the *deus ex machina* appeared precisely at the right moment, just as if we had all been puppets in a sensation novel. The noise of wheels and the clatter of hoofs were suddenly heard in the usual approved style, and in a few minutes a gentleman entered who happened to be the official investigator into criminal affairs—what is called in French procedure the *juge d'instruction*. He was accidentally passing through the village, and had stopped to change horses. Instead of a few minutes' rest, as he had expected, he found a heavy bit of work. Fortunately for us, he was equal to the occasion. Unlike the majority of Russian officials, he was no friend of lengthy procedure, and contrived, with the help of a few cigarettes, to make the case quite clear in a very short time. There was here, he explained, no case of attempt to murder, or anything of the kind. My friend had been attacked by the station-keeper and his two assistants, who had no right to be in the travellers' room, and he had fired the revolver to frighten his assailants and bring assistance.

"A Daniel! yea, a Daniel!" I muttered to myself, as

I heard this explanation. My surprise was excited not by the ingenuity of the decision, which was nothing more than a simple statement of what had really taken place, but by the fact that a man who was at once a lawyer and a Russian official should have been able to take such a plain, common-sense view of the case!

Before midnight we were once more free men, driving rapidly in the clear moonlight to the next station, under the escort of a fully-armed Circassian Cossack; but the idea that we might have been detained for weeks in that miserable place long haunted us like a nightmare.

CHAPTER II.

IN THE NORTHERN FORESTS.

Bird's-eye View of Russia—The Northern Forests—Purpose of my Journey—Negotiations—The Road—A Village—Peasant's House—Vapour-Baths—Curious Custom—Arrival.

THERE are many ways of describing a country that one has visited. The simplest and most common method is to give a chronological account of the journey; and this is perhaps the best way when the journey does not extend over more than a few weeks. But it cannot be conveniently employed in the case of a residence of several years. Did I adopt it, I should very soon exhaust the reader's patience. I should have to take him with me to a secluded village, and make him wait for me till I had learned to speak the language. Thence he would have to accompany me to a provincial town, and spend months in a public office, whilst I endeavoured to master the mysteries of local self-government. After this he would have to spend nearly two years with me in a big library, where I studied the history and literature of the country. And so on and so on. Even my journeys would prove tedious to him, as they have often been to myself, for he would have to drive with me many a score of weary miles, where even the most zealous diary-writer would find little to record beyond the names of the post-stations.

It will be well for me, then, to avoid the strictly chronological method, and confine myself to a description of the more striking objects and incidents that came under my notice. The knowledge which I derived from books will help me to supply a running commentary on what I happened to see and hear.

Instead of beginning in the usual way with St. Petersburg, I prefer for many reasons to leave the description of the capital till some future time, and plunge at once into the great northern forest region.

If it were possible to get a bird's-eye view of European Russia, the spectator would perceive that the country is composed of two halves, widely differing from each other in character. The northern half is a land of forest and morass, plentifully supplied with water in the form of rivers, lakes, and marshes, and broken up by numerous patches of cultivation. The southern half is, as it were, the other side of the pattern—an immense expanse of rich arable land, broken up by occasional patches of sand or forest. The imaginary undulating line separating those two regions starts from the western frontier about the 50th parallel of latitude, and runs in a north-easterly direction till it enters the Ural range at about 56° N.L.

Well do I remember my first experience of travel in the northern region, and the weeks of voluntary exile which formed the goal of the journey. My reason for undertaking the journey was this: a few months of life in St. Petersburg had fully convinced me that the Russian language is one of those things which can only

be acquired by practice, and that even a person of antidiluvian longevity might spend all his life in that city without learning to express himself fluently in the vernacular—especially if he has the misfortune of being able to speak French and German. With his friends and associates he speaks French or English. German serves as a medium of communication with waiters and other people of that class. It is only with Isvoshtchiki—the drivers of the little open droskies which fulfil the function of cabs—that he is obliged to use the native tongue, and with them a very limited vocabulary suffices. The ordinal numerals and four short, easily-acquired expressions—*poshol* (go on), *na prava* (to the right), *na lyevo* (to the left), and *stoi* (stop)—are all that is required.

Whilst I was considering how I could get beyond the sphere of West-European languages, a friend came to my assistance, and suggested that I should go to his estate in the province of Novgorod, where I should find an intelligent, amiable parish priest, quite innocent of any linguistic acquirements. This proposal I at once adopted, and accordingly found myself one morning at a small station of the Moscow Railway, endeavouring to explain to a peasant in sheep's clothing that I wished to be conveyed to Ivánofka, the village where my future teacher lived. At that time I still spoke Russian in a very fragmentary and confused way—pretty much as Spanish cows are popularly supposed to speak French. My first remark therefore, being literally interpreted, was—"Ivánofka. Horses. You can?" The point of

interrogation was expressed by a simultaneous raising of the voice and the eyebrows.

"Ivánofka?" said the peasant, in an interrogatory tone of voice. In Russia, as in other countries, the peasantry when speaking with strangers like to repeat questions, apparently for the purpose of gaining time.

"Ivánofka," I replied.

"Now?"

"Now!"

After some reflection the peasant nodded and said something which I did not understand, but which I assumed to mean that he was open to consider proposals for transporting me to my destination.

"Roubles. How many?"

To judge by the knitting of the brows and the scratching of the head, I should say that that question gave occasion to a very abstruse mathematical calculation. Gradually the look of concentrated attention gave place to an expression such as children assume when they endeavour to get a parental decision reversed by means of coaxing. Then came a stream of soft words which were to me utterly unintelligible.

"How many?" I repeated.

"Ten!" said the peasant, in a hesitating, apologetic way, as if he were more than half-ashamed of what he was saying.

"Ten!" I exclaimed, indignantly. "Two, enough!" and waving my hand to indicate that I should be no party to such a piece of extortion, I re-entered the

station. As I reached the door I heard him say, "Master, master! Eight!" But I took no notice of the proposal.

I must not weary the reader with a detailed account of the succeeding negotiations, which were conducted with extreme diplomatic caution on both sides, as if a cession of territory or the payment of a war-contribution had been the subject of discussion. Three times he drove away and three times returned. Each time he abated his pretensions, and each time I slightly increased my offer. At last, when I began to fear that he had finally taken his departure and had left me to my own devices, he re-entered the room and took up my baggage, indicating thereby that he agreed to my last offer.

The sum agreed upon—four roubles—would have been, under ordinary circumstances, more than sufficient for the distance, which was only about twenty miles; but before proceeding far I discovered that the circumstances were by no means ordinary, and I began to understand the pantomimic gesticulation which had puzzled me during the negotiations. Heavy rain had fallen without interruption for several days, and now the track on which we were travelling could not, without poetical license, be described as a road. In some parts it resembled a water-course, in others a quagmire, and at least during the first half of the journey I was constantly reminded of that stage in the work of creation when the water was not yet separated from the dry land. During the few moments when the work of keeping my

balance and preventing my baggage from being lost did not engross all my attention, I speculated on the possibility of constructing a boat-carriage, to be drawn by a swift-footed hippopotamus, or some other animal that feels itself at home equally on land and in water. On the whole, the project seemed to me then as useful and as feasible as Fourrier's idea of making whales play the part of tug-steamers.

Fortunately for us, our two lean, wiry little horses did not object to being used as aquatic animals. They took the water bravely, and plunged through the mud in gallant style. The *telega* in which we were seated—a four-wheeled skeleton cart—did not submit to the ill-treatment so silently. It creaked out its remonstrances and entreaties, and at the more difficult spots threatened to go to pieces; but its owner understood its character and capabilities, and paid no attention to its ominous threats. Once, indeed, a wheel came off, but it was soon fished out of the mud and replaced, and no further casualty occurred.

The horses did their work so well that, when about mid-day we arrived at a village, I could not refuse to let them have some rest and refreshment—all the more as my own thoughts had begun to turn in that direction.

The village, as villages in that part of the country generally, consisted of two long parallel rows of wooden houses. The road—if a stratum of mud more than a foot in depth can be called by that name—formed the intervening space. All the houses turned their gables to the

road, and some of them had pretensions to architectural decoration in the form of rude perforated wood-work. Between the houses, and in a line with them, were great wooden gates and high wooden fences, separating the courtyards from the road. Into one of these yards, near the further end of the village, our horses turned of their own accord.

"An inn?" I said, in an interrogative tone.

The driver shook his head and said something, in which I detected the word "friend." Evidently there was no hostelry for man and beast in the village, and the driver was using a friend's house for the purpose.

The yard was flanked on the one side by an open shed, containing rude agricultural implements which might throw some light on the agriculture of the primitive Aryans, and on the other side by the dwelling-house and stable. Both the house and stable were built of logs, nearly cylindrical in form, and placed in horizontal tiers.

Two of the strongest of human motives, hunger and curiosity, impelled me to enter the house at once. Without waiting for an invitation, I went up to the door—half protected against the winter snows by a small open portico—and unceremoniously walked in. The first apartment was empty, but I noticed a low door in the wall to the left, and passing through this, entered the principal room. As the scene was new to me, I noted the principal objects. In the wall before me were two small square windows looking out upon the

road, and in the corner to the right, nearer to the ceiling than to the floor, was a little triangular shelf, on which stood a religious picture. Before the picture hung a curious oil lamp. In the corner to the left of the door was a gigantic stove, built of brick, and whitewashed. From the top of the stove to the wall on the right stretched what might be called an enormous shelf, six or eight feet in breadth. This is the so-called *palati*, as I afterwards discovered, and serves as a bed for part of the family. The furniture consisted of a long wooden bench attached to the wall on the right, a big, heavy deal table, and a few wooden stools.

Whilst I was leisurely surveying these objects I heard a noise on the top of the stove, and, looking up, perceived a human face, with long hair parted in the middle, and a full yellow beard. I was considerably astonished by this apparition, for the air in the room was stifling, and I had some difficulty in believing that any created being—except perhaps a salamander or a negro—could exist in such a position. I looked hard to convince myself that I was not the victim of a delusion. As I stared, the head nodded slowly and pronounced the customary form of greeting.

I returned the greeting slowly, wondering what was to come next.

"Ill, very ill!" sighed the head.

"I'm not astonished at that," I remarked, in an "aside." "If I were where you are I should be very ill too."

"Hot, very hot?" I remarked, interrogatively.

"Nitchevo"—that is to say, "not particularly." This remark astonished me all the more, as I noticed at that very moment that the body to which the head belonged was enveloped in a sheep-skin!

After living some time in Russia I was no longer surprised by such incidents, for I soon discovered that the Russian peasant has a marvellous power of bearing extreme heat as well as extreme cold. When a coachman takes his master or mistress to the theatre or to a party, he never thinks of going home and returning at an appointed time. Hour after hour he sits placidly on the box, and though the cold be of an intensity such as is never experienced in our temperate climate, he can sleep as tranquilly as the lazzarone at mid-day in Naples. In that respect the Russian peasant seems to be first-cousin to the polar bear, but, unlike the animals of the arctic regions, he is not at all incommoded by excessive heat. On the contrary, he likes it when he can get it, and never omits an opportunity of laying in a reserve supply of caloric. He even delights in rapid transitions from one extreme to the other, as is amply proved by a curious custom which deserves to be recorded.

The reader must know that in the life of the Russian peasantry the weekly vapour-bath plays a most important part. It has even a certain religious signification, for no good orthodox peasant would dare to enter a church after being soiled by certain kinds of pollution without cleansing himself physically and morally by means of the bath. In the weekly arrangements it

forms the occupation for Saturday afternoon, and care is taken to avoid thereafter all pollution until after the morning service on Sunday. Many villages possess a public or communal bath of the most primitive construction, but in some parts of the country—I am not sure how far the practice extends—the peasants take their vapour-bath in the household oven in which the bread is baked! In all cases the operation is pushed to the extreme limit of human endurance—far beyond the utmost limit that can be endured by those who have not been accustomed to it from childhood. For my own part, I only made the experiment once; and when I informed my attendant that my life was in danger from congestion of the brain, he laughed outright, and told me that the operation had only begun. Most astounding of all—and this brings me to the fact which led me into this digression—the peasants in winter often rush out of the bath and roll themselves in snow! This aptly illustrates a common Russian proverb, which says that what is health to the Russian is death to the German.

Cold water, as well as hot vapour, is sometimes used as a means of purification. In the villages the old pagan habit of dressing in absurd disguises at certain seasons—as is done during the Carnival in Roman Catholic countries with the approval, or at least connivance, of the Church—still survives, but it is regarded as not altogether sinless. He who uses such disguises places himself to a certain extent under the influence of the Evil One, thereby putting his soul in jeopardy; and to free himself from this danger he has to purify himself in the

following way. When the ceremony of blessing the waters is performed, by breaking a hole in the ice and dipping with certain religious rites a cross into the water, he should plunge into the hole as soon as possible after the ceremony. I remember once at Yaroslaff on the Volga, two young peasants successfully accomplished this feat—though the police, it was said, had orders to prevent it—and escaped, apparently without evil consequences, though the Fahrenheit thermometer was below zero. How far this curious custom has really a purifying influence, is a question which must be left to theologians; but even an ordinary mortal may justifiably assume that, if it be regarded as a penance, it must have a certain deterrent effect. The man or woman who foresees the necessity of undergoing this severe penance will think twice before putting on a disguise. So at least it must have been in the good old times, but in these degenerate days—among the Russian peasantry as elsewhere—the fear of the Devil, which was formerly, if not the beginning, at least one of the essential elements, of wisdom, has greatly decreased. Many a young peasant will now thoughtlessly disguise himself, and when the consecration of the water is performed, will stand and look on passively like an ordinary spectator! It would seem that the Devil, like his enemy the Pope, is destined to lose gradually his temporal power.

But all this time I am neglecting my new acquaintance on the top of the stove. In reality I did not neglect him, but listened most attentively to every word of the long tale that he recited. What it was all about

I could only vaguely guess, for I did not understand more than five per cent. of the words used, but I assumed from the tone and gestures that he was relating to me all the incidents and symptoms of his illness. And a very severe illness it must have been, for it requires a very considerable amount of physical suffering to make the patient Russian peasant groan. Before he had finished his tale a woman entered, apparently his wife. To her I explained that I had a strong desire to eat and drink, and that I wished to know what she could give me. By a good deal of laborious explanation I was made to understand that I could have eggs, black bread, and butter; and we agreed that there should be a division of labour: my hostess should prepare the Samovar for boiling water, whilst I should fry the eggs to my own satisfaction.

In a few minutes the repast was ready, and, though not very delicate, was highly acceptable. The tea and sugar I had of course brought with me; the eggs were not very highly flavoured; and the black rye-bread, strongly intermixed with sand, could be eaten by a peculiar and easily-acquired method of mastication, in which the upper molars were never allowed to touch those of the lower jaw. In this way the grating of the sand between the teeth was avoided. The butter alone was a failure; though strongly recommended by the good housewife, it could not be put to any practical use, for the simple reason that it was impossible to sit in the same room with it. The milk, however, which was offered to me in an earthenware pitcher, was very palatable.

Eggs, black bread, milk, and tea—these formed my ordinary articles of food during all my wanderings in Northern Russia. Occasionally potatoes could be got, and afforded the possibility of varying the bill of fare. The favourite materials employed in the native cookery are sour cabbage, cucumbers, and kvass—a kind of very small beer made from black bread. None of these can be recommended to the traveller who is not already accustomed to them.

The remainder of the journey was accomplished at a rather more rapid pace than the preceding part, for the road was decidedly better, though it was traversed by numerous half-buried roots, which produced violent jolts. From the conversation of the driver I gathered that wolves, bears, and elks were found in the forest through which we were passing.

The sun had long since set when we reached our destination, and I found to my dismay that the priest's house was closed for the night. To rouse the reverend personage from his slumbers, and endeavour to explain to him with my limited vocabulary the object of my visit, was not to be thought of. On the other hand, there was no inn of any kind in the vicinity. When I consulted the driver what was to be done, he meditated for a little, and then pointed to a large house at some distance where there were still lights. It turned out to be the country-house of the gentleman who had advised me to undertake the journey, and here, after a short explanation, I was hospitably received.

It had been my intention to live in the priest's

house, but a short interview with him on the following day convinced me that that part of my plan could not be carried out. The preliminary objections that I should find but poor fare in his humble household, and much more of the same kind, were at once put aside by my assurance that, as an old traveller, I was well accustomed to simple fare, and could always accommodate myself to the habits of people among whom my lot happened to be cast. But there was a more serious difficulty. The priest's family had, as is generally the case with priests' families, been rapidly increasing during the last few years, and his house had not been growing with equal rapidity. The natural consequence of this was that he had not a room or a bed to spare. The little room which he had formerly kept for occasional visitors was now occupied by his eldest daughter, who had returned from a "school for the daughters of the clergy," where she had been for the last two years. Under these circumstances, I was constrained to accept the kind proposal made to me by the representative of my absent friend, that I should take up my quarters in one of the numerous unoccupied rooms in the manor-house. This arrangement, I was reminded, would not at all interfere with my proposed studies, for the priest lived close at hand, and I might spend with him as much time as I liked.

And now let me introduce the reader to my reverend teacher, and one or two other personages whose acquaintance I made during my voluntary exile.

CHAPTER III.

VOLUNTARY EXILE

Ivánofka—History of the Place—The Steward of the Estate—Slavonian and Teutonic Natures—A German's View of the Emancipation—Justices of the Peace—New School of Morals—The Russian Language—Linguistic Talent of the Russians—My Teacher—A Big Dose of Current History.

THIS village, Ivánofka by name, in which I proposed to spend some months, was rather more picturesque than villages in these northern forests commonly are. The peasants' huts, built on both sides of a straight road, were colourless enough, and the big church, with its five pear-shaped cupolas rising out of the bright green roof and its ugly belfry in the Renaissance style, was not by any means beautiful in itself; but when seen from a little distance, especially in the soft evening twilight, the whole might have been made the subject of a very pleasing picture. From the point which a landscape-painter would naturally have chosen, the foreground was formed by a meadow, through which flowed sluggishly a meandering stream. On a bit of rising ground to the right, and half concealed by an intervening cluster of old rich-coloured pines, stood the manor-house—a big, box-shaped, whitewashed building, with a verandah in front, overlooking a small plot that might some day become a flower-garden. To the left of this stood the village, the houses grouping prettily with the big church, and a

little further in this direction was an avenue of graceful birches. On the extreme left were fields, bounded by a dark border of fir-trees. Could the spectator have raised himself a few hundred feet from the ground, he would have seen that there were fields beyond the village, and that the whole of this agricultural oasis was imbedded in a forest stretching in all directions as far as the eye could reach.

The history of the place may be told in a few words. In former times the estate, including the village and all its inhabitants, had belonged to a monastery, but when the church lands were secularised by Catherine II., in 1764, it became the property of the State. Some years afterwards the Empress granted it, with the serfs and everything else which it contained, to an old general who had distinguished himself in the Turkish wars. From that time it had remained in the K—— family. Some time between the years 1820 and 1840, the big church and the mansion-house had been built by the father of the actual possessor, who loved country life, and devoted a large part of his time and energies to the management of his estate. His son, on the contrary, preferred St. Petersburg to the country, served in one of the public offices, loved passionately French plays and other products of urban civilisation, and left the entire management of the property to a German steward, popularly known as Karl Karl'itch, whom I shall introduce to the reader presently.

The village annals contained no important events, except bad harvests, cattle-plagues, and destructive

fires, with which the inhabitants seem to have been periodically visited from time immemorial. If good harvests were ever experienced, they must have faded from the popular recollection. Then there were certain ancient traditions which might have been lessened in bulk and improved in quality by being subjected to searching historical criticism. More than once, for instance, a *Leshie*, or wood-sprite, had been seen in the neighbourhood; and in several households the Domovoi, or Brownie, had been known to play strange pranks until he was properly propitiated. And as a set-off against these manifestations of evil powers, there were well-authenticated stories about a miracle-working image that had mysteriously appeared on the branch of a tree, and about numerous miraculous cures that had been effected by means of pilgrimages to holy shrines.

But it is time to introduce the principal personages of this little community. Of these, by far the most important—*facile princeps*, as a lover of Latinity would say—was Karl Karl'itch, the steward.

First of all I ought, perhaps, to explain how Karl Schmidt, the son of a well-to-do *Bauer* in the Prussian village of Schönhausen, became Karl Karl'itch, the principal personage in the Russian village of Ivánofka.

About twenty years ago, many of the Russian landed proprietors had become alive to the necessity of improving the primitive, traditional method of agriculture, and sought for this purpose German stewards for their estates. Among these proprietors was the owner of Ivánofka.

Through the medium of a friend in Berlin, he succeeded in engaging for a moderate salary a young man who had just finished his studies in one of the German schools of agriculture—the institution at Hohenheim, if my memory does not deceive me. This young man had arrived in Russia as plain Karl Schmidt, but his name was soon transformed into Karl Karl'itch, not from any desire of his own, but in accordance with a curious Russian custom. In Russia, one usually calls a man not by his family name, but by his Christian name and patronymic—the latter being formed from the name of his father. Thus, if a man's name is Nicholas, and his father's Christian name is—or was—Ivan, you address him as Nikolaï Ivánovitch (pronounced Iván'itch); and if this man should happen to have a sister called Mary, you will address her—even though she should be married—as Marya Ivánovna (pronounced Ivanna).

Immediately on his arrival, young Schmidt had set himself vigorously to re-organise the estate and improve the method of agriculture. Some ploughs, harrows, and other implements which had been imported at a former period were dragged out of the obscurity in which they had lain for several years, and an attempt was made to farm on scientific principles. The attempt was far from being completely successful, for the serfs could not be made to work like regularly-trained German labourers. In spite of all admonitions, threats, and punishments, they persisted in working slowly, listlessly, inaccurately, and occasionally they broke the new instruments, from carelessness or some more culpable motive. Karl

Karl'itch was not naturally a hard-hearted man, but he was very rigid in his notions of duty, and could be cruelly severe when his orders were not executed with an accuracy and punctuality that seemed to the Russian rustic mind mere useless pedantry. The serfs did not offer him any open opposition, and were always obsequiously respectful in their demeanour towards him, but they invariably frustrated his plans by their carelessness and stolid passive resistance. Thus arose that silent conflict and that smouldering mutual enmity that almost always result from the contact of Teutonic with Slavonian natures. The serfs instinctively regretted the good old times, when they lived under the rough and ready patriarchal rule of their master, assisted by a native "Burmister," or overseer, who was one of themselves. The Burmister had not been always honest in his dealings with them, and the master had often, when in anger, ordered severe punishments to be inflicted; but the Burmister had not attempted to make them change their old habits, and had shut his eyes to many little sins of omission and commission, whilst the master was always ready to assist them in difficulties, and commonly treated them in a kindly, familiar way. As the old Russian proverb has it, "Where anger is, there too is kindly forgiveness." Karl Karl'itch, on the contrary, was the personification of uncompassionate, inflexible law. Blind rage and compassionate kindliness were alike foreign to his system of government. If he had any feeling towards the serfs, it was one of chronic contempt. The word Durák (blockhead) was constantly on his lips, and when any bit of work

was well done, he took it as a matter of course, and never thought of giving a word of approval or encouragement.

When it became evident, in 1859, that the emancipation of the serfs was at hand, Karl Karl'itch confidently predicted that the country would inevitably go to ruin. He knew by experience that the peasants were lazy and improvident, even when they lived under the tutelage of a master, and with the fear of the rod before their eyes. What would they become when this guidance and salutary restraint would be removed? The prospect raised terrible forebodings in the mind of the worthy steward, who had his employer's interests really at heart; and these forebodings were considerably increased and intensified when he learned that the peasants were to receive by law the land which they occupied on sufferance, and which comprised about a half of the whole arable land of the estate. This arrangement he declared to be a dangerous and unjustifiable infraction of the sacred rights of property, which savoured strongly of communism and could have but one practical result: the emancipated peasants would live by the cultivation of their own land, and would not consent on any terms to work for their former master. In the few months which immediately followed the publication of the Emancipation Edict, he found much to confirm his most gloomy apprehensions. The peasants showed themselves dissatisfied with the privileges conferred upon them, and sought to evade the corresponding duties imposed on them by the new law. In vain he endeavoured, by exhortations, promises, and

threats, to get the most necessary part of the field work done, and showed the peasants the provision of the law enjoining them to obey and work as of old until some new arrangement should be made. To all his appeals they replied that they were no longer obliged to work for their former master; and he was at last forced to appeal to the authorities. This step had a certain effect, but the field work was executed that year even worse than usual, and the harvest suffered in consequence.

Since that time things had gradually improved. The peasants had discovered that they could not support themselves and pay their taxes from the land ceded to them, and had accordingly consented to till the proprietor's fields for a moderate compensation. "These two years," said Karl Karl'itch to me, with an air of honest self-satisfaction, "I have been able, after paying all expenses, to transmit little sums to the young master in St. Petersburg. It was certainly not much, but it shows that things are better than they were. Still, it is hard, uphill work. The peasants have not been improved by liberty. They now work less and drink more than they did in the times of serfage, and if you say a word to them they'll go away, and not work for you at all." Here Karl Karl'itch indemnified himself for his recent self-control in the presence of his workers by using a series of the strongest epithets which the combined languages of his native and of his adopted country could supply. "But laziness and drunkenness are not their only faults. They let their cattle wander

into our fields, and never lose an opportunity of stealing firewood from the forest."

"But you have now for such matters the rural justices of the peace," I ventured to suggest.

"The justices of the peace!" . . . . . Here Karl Karl'itch used an inelegant expression, which showed plainly that he was no unqualified admirer of the new judicial institutions. "What is the use of applying to the justices? The nearest one lives six miles off, and when I go to him he evidently tries to make me lose as much time as possible. I am sure to lose nearly a whole day, and at the end of it I may find that I have got nothing for my pains. These justices always try to find some excuse for the peasant, and when they do condemn, by way of exception, the affair does not end there. There are constantly a number of petti-fogging practitioners prowling about—for the most part rascally scribes who have been dismissed from the public offices for pilfering and extorting too openly—and they are always ready to whisper to the peasant that he should appeal. The peasant knows that the decision is just, but he is easily persuaded that by appealing to the Monthly Sessions he gets another draw in the lottery, and may perhaps draw a prize. He lets the rascally scribe, therefore, draw up an appeal for him, and I receive an invitation to attend the Session of Justices in the district town on a certain day. It is a good five-and-thirty miles to the district town, as you know, but I get up early, and arrive at eleven o'clock, the hour stated in the official notice. A crowd of peasants are hanging

about the door of the court, but the only official present is the porter. I inquire of him when my case is likely to come on, and receive the laconic answer, 'How should I know?' After half an hour the secretary arrives. I repeat my question, and receive the same answer. Another half-hour passes, and one of the justices drives up in his tarantass. Perhaps he is a glib-tongued gentleman, and assures me that the proceedings will commence at once: 'Sei tchas! sei tchas!' Don't believe what the priest or the dictionary tells you about the meaning of that expression. The dictionary will tell you that it means 'immediately,' but that's all nonsense. In the mouth of a Russian it means 'in an hour,' 'next week,' 'in a year or two,' 'never,'—most commonly 'never.' Like many other words in Russian, 'sei tchas' can be understood only after long experience. A second justice drives up, and then a third. No more are required by law, but these gentlemen must first smoke several cigarettes and discuss all the local news before they begin work. At last they take their seats on the bench—a slightly-elevated platform at one end of the room—behind a table covered with green baize, and the proceedings commence. My case is sure to be pretty far down on the list—the secretary takes, I believe, a malicious pleasure in watching my impatience—and before it is called the justices have to retire at least once for refreshments and cigarettes. I have to amuse myself by listening to the other cases, and some of them, I can assure you, are amusing enough. The walls of that room must be by this time pretty well saturated with

perjury, and many of the witnesses catch at once the infection. Perhaps I may tell you some other time a few of the amusing incidents that I have seen there. At last my case is called. It is as clear as daylight, but the rascally pettifogger is there with a long prepared speech. He holds in his hand a small volume of the codified law, and quotes paragraphs which no amount of human ingenuity can make to bear upon the subject. Perhaps the previous decision is confirmed; perhaps it is reversed; in either case, I have lost a second day and exhausted more patience than I can conveniently spare. And something even worse may happen, as I know by experience. Once during a case of mine there was some little informality—some one inadvertently opened the door of the consulting-room when the decision was being written, or some other little incident of the sort occurred, and the rascally pettifogger complained to the Supreme Court of Revision, which is a part of the Senate. The case was all about a few roubles, but it was discussed in St. Petersburg, and afterwards tried over again by another court of justices. Now I have paid my *lehrgeld*, and go no more to law."

"Then you must expose yourself to all kinds of extortion?"

"Not so much as you might imagine. I have my own way of dispensing justice. When I catch a peasant's horse or cow in our fields, I lock it up and make the owner pay a ransom."

"Is it not rather dangerous," I inquired, "to take the law thus into your own hands? I have heard that

the Russian justices are extremely severe against any one who has recourse to what your German jurists call *Selbsthülfe.*"

"That they are! So long as you are in Russia, you had much better let yourself be quietly robbed than use any violence against the robber. It is less trouble, and it is cheaper in the long run. If you do not, you may unexpectedly find yourself some fine morning in prison! You must know that many of the young justices belong to the new school of morals."

"What is that? I have not heard of any new discoveries lately in the sphere of speculative ethics."

"Well, to tell you the truth, I am not one of the initiated, and I can only tell you what I hear. So far as I have noticed, the representatives of the new doctrine talk chiefly about Gumannost' and Tchelovetcheskoe dostoinstvo. You know what these words mean?"

"Humanity, or rather humanitarianism and human dignity," I replied, not sorry to give a proof that I was advancing in my studies.

"There, again, you allow your dictionary and your priest to mislead you. These terms, when used by a Russian, cover much more than we understand by them, and those who use them most frequently have generally a special tenderness for all kinds of malefactors. In the Dark Ages, which are only now coming to a close, malefactors were popularly believed to be bad, dangerous people; but it has been lately discovered that this is a delusion. A young proprietor who lives not far off assures me that they are the true Protestants, and the

most powerful social reformers! They protest practically against those imperfections of social organisation of which they are the involuntary victims. The feeble, characterless man quietly submits to his chains; the bold, generous, strong man breaks his fetters, and helps others to do the same. A very ingenious defence of all kinds of rascality, isn't it?"

"Well, it is a theory that might certainly be carried too far, and might easily lead to very inconvenient conclusions; but I am not sure that, theoretically speaking, it does not contain a certain element of truth. It ought at least to foster that charity which we are enjoined to practise towards all men. But perhaps 'all men' does not include publicans and sinners?"

On hearing these words, Karl Karl'itch turned to me, and every feature of his honest German face expressed the most undisguised astonishment. "Are you, too, a Nihilist?" he inquired, as soon as he had partially recovered his breath.

"I really don't know what a Nihilist is, but I may assure you that I am not an 'ist' of any kind. What is a Nihilist?"

"If you live long in Russia you'll learn that without my telling you. As I was saying, I am not at all afraid of the peasants citing me before the justice. They know better. If they gave me too much trouble I could starve their cattle."

"Yes, when you catch them in your fields," I remarked, taking no notice of the abrupt turn which he had given to the conversation.

"I can do it without that. You must know that, by the Emancipation Law, the peasants received arable land, but they received no pasturage. I have the whip-hand of them there!"

The remarks of Karl Karl'itch on men and things were to me always interesting, for he was a shrewd observer, and displayed occasionally a pleasant, dry humour. But I very soon discovered that his opinions were not to be accepted without reserve. His strong, inflexible Teutonic nature often prevented him from judging impartially. He had no sympathy with the men and the institutions around him, and consequently he was unable to see things from the inside. The specks and blemishes on the surface he perceived clearly enough, but he had no knowledge of the secret, deep-rooted causes by which these specks and blemishes were produced. The simple fact that a man was a Russian satisfactorily accounted, in his opinion, for any kind of moral deformity; and his knowledge turned out to be by no means so extensive as I had at first supposed. Though he had been about fifteen years in the country, he knew very little about the life of the peasants beyond that small part of it which concerned directly his own interests and those of his employer. Of the communal organisation, of the domestic life, religious beliefs, and ceremonial practices of the peasantry, of the occupations of those who annually left the village in search of labour—of all these and cognate subjects he knew little, and the little he happened to know was in great part false. In order to gain a knowledge of these matters it would be

better, I perceived, to consult the priest, or, better still, the peasants themselves. But to do this it would be necessary to understand easily and speak fluently the colloquial language, and I was still very far from having acquired the requisite proficiency.

Even for one who possesses a natural facility for acquiring foreign tongues, the learning of Russian is by no means an easy task. Though Russian is essentially an Aryan language like our own, and contains only a slight intermixture of Tartar words—such as, *bashlyk* (a hood), *kalpak* (a night-cap), *arbuz* (a water-melon), &c.—it contains certain sounds unknown to West-European ears, and difficult for West-European tongues, and its roots, though in great part derived from the same original stock as those of the Græco-Latin and Teutonic languages, are generally not at all easily recognised. As an illustration of this, take the Russian word *otéts*. Strange as it may at first sight appear, this word is merely another form of our word *father*, of the German *vater*, and of the French *père*. The syllable *ets* is the ordinary Russian termination denoting the agent, corresponding to the English and German ending *er*, as we see in such words as—*kup-ets* (a buyer), *plov-ets* (a swimmer), and many others. The root *ot* is a mutilated form of *vot*, as we see in the word *otchina* (a paternal inheritance), which is frequently written *votchina*. Now *vot* is evidently the same root as the German *vat* and the English *fath*. *Quod erat demonstrandum*. All this is simple enough, and goes to prove the fundamental dentity, or rather the community of origin, of the

Slavonian and Teutonic languages; but it will be readily understood that etymological analogies so carefully disguised are of little practical use in helping us to acquire a foreign tongue. Besides this, the grammatical forms and constructions in Russian are very peculiar, and present a great many strange irregularities. As an illustration of this we may take the future tense. The Russian verb has commonly a simple and a frequentative future. The latter is always regularly formed by means of an auxiliary with the infinitive, as in English, but the former is constructed in a variety of ways, for which no rule can be given, so that the simple future of each individual verb must be learned by a pure effort of memory. In many verbs it is formed by prefixing a preposition, but it is impossible to determine by rule which preposition should be used. Thus *idú* (I go) becomes *poidú*, *pishú* (I write) becomes *napishú*, *pyú* (I drink) becomes *vuipyu*, and so on.

Closely akin to the difficulties of pronunciation is the difficulty of accentuating the proper syllable. In this respect, Russian is like Greek; you can never tell *à priori* on what syllable the accent falls. But it is more puzzling than Greek, for two reasons: firstly, it is not customary to print Russian with accents; and secondly, no one has yet been able to lay down precise rules for the transposition of the accent in the various inflections of the same word. Of this latter peculiarity, let one illustration suffice. The word *ruká* (hand) has the accent on the last syllable, but in the accusative (*rúku*) the accent goes back to the penultimate. It must

not, however, be assumed that in all words of this type a similar transposition takes place. The word *bedá* (misfortune), for instance, as well as very many others, always retains the accent on the last syllable.

These and many similar difficulties, which need not be here enumerated, can be mastered only by a long familiarity with the language. Serious as they are, they need not frighten any one who is in the habit of learning foreign tongues. The ear and the tongue gradually become familiar with the peculiarities of inflection and accentuation, and practice fulfils the same function as abstract rules. The foreigner, it is true, however fluently he may talk, will never be able to pass for a Russian. If he speaks for any length of time he will be sure to betray himself. But there is here nothing peculiar. The same remark may be made regarding the English-speaking Russian. I have conversed with scores of Russians who spoke English admirably, but I have never met any who spoke it precisely like Englishmen, except those who had learned it in their infancy.

It is commonly supposed that Russians have been endowed by Nature with a peculiar linguistic talent. Their own language, it is said, is so difficult, that they have no difficulty in acquiring others. This common belief requires, as it seems to me, some explanation. That educated Russians are better linguists than the educated classes of Western Europe, there can be no possible doubt, for they always speak French, and very often English and German also. The question, however, is whether this is the result of a psychological

peculiarity, or of other causes. Now, without venturing to deny the existence of a psychological peculiarity, I should say that the other causes have at least exercised a powerful influence. Any Russian who wishes to be regarded as *civilise* must possess at least one foreign language; and, as a consequence of this, the children of the upper classes are always taught at least French in their infancy. Many households comprise a German nurse, a French tutor, and an English governess; and the children thus become accustomed from their earliest years to the use of these three languages. Besides this, the Russian language is phonetically very rich, and contains nearly all the sounds which are to be found in West-European languages. But there are some delicate sounds which it does not contain, and these the Russian rarely acquires correctly. As an instance of these, I may cite the short vowel sound in the word *but*, and the long vowel sound in the word *all*. Into such words even those Russians who speak our language with perfect correctness almost always introduce a modified sound of *o*, which falls unpleasantly on the fastidious English ear. As an instance of grammatical difficulties, I may mention that few Russians master the delicate distinction between *was* and *has been*.

Perhaps on the whole it would be well to apply here the Darwinian theory, and suppose that the Russian noblesse, having been obliged for several generations to acquire foreign languages, have gradually developed a hereditary polyglot talent.

Several circumstances concurred to assist me in my efforts, during my voluntary exile, to acquire at least such a knowledge of the language as would enable me to converse freely with the peasantry. In the first place, my reverend teacher was an agreeable, kindly, talkative man, who took a great delight in telling interminable stories, quite independently of any satisfaction which he might derive from the consciousness of their being understood and appreciated. Even when walking alone he was always muttering something to an imagined listener. A stranger meeting him on such occasions might have supposed that he was holding converse with unseen spirits, though his broad muscular form and rubicund face militated strongly against such a supposition; but no man, woman, or child living within a radius of ten miles would ever have fallen into this mistake. Every one in the neighbourhood knew that "Bátushka"—(papa) as he was familiarly called—was too prosaical, practical a man to see things ethereal, that he was an irrepressible talker, and that when he could not conveniently find an audience he created one by his own imagination. This peculiarity of his rendered me good service. Though for some time I understood very little of what he said, and very often misplaced the positive and negative monosyllables which I hazarded occasionally by way of encouragement, he talked vigorously all the same. Like all garrulous people, he was constantly repeating himself; but to this I did not object, for the custom—however objectionable in ordinary society—was for me highly beneficial, and

when I had already heard a story once or twice before, it was much easier for me to assume at the proper moment the requisite expression.

Another fortunate circumstance was that in Ivánofka there were no distractions, so that the whole of the day and a great part of the night could be devoted to study. My chief amusement was an occasional walk in the fields with Karl Karl'itch; and even this mild form of dissipation could not always be obtained, for as soon as rain had fallen it was difficult to go beyond the verandah—the mud precluding the possibility of a constitutional. The nearest approach to excitement was mushroom-gathering; and in this occupation my inability to distinguish the edible from the poisonous species made my efforts unacceptable. We lived so "far from the madding crowd" that its din scarcely reached our ears. A week or ten days might pass without our receiving any intelligence from the outer world. The nearest post-office was at the railway-station, and with that distant point we had no regular system of communication. Letters and newspapers remained there till called for, and were brought to us intermittently when some one of our neighbours happened to pass that way. Current history was thus administered to us in big doses.

One very big dose I remember well. For a much longer time than usual no volunteer letter-carrier had appeared, and the delay was more than usually tantalising, because it was known that war had broken out between France and Germany. At last a big bundle of

newspapers was brought to me. Impatient to learn whether any great battle had been fought, I began by examining the latest number of the paper, and stumbled at once on an article headed, "Latest Intelligence: the Emperor at Wilhelmshöhe!!!" The large type in which the heading was printed and the three marks of exclamation showed plainly that the article was very important. I began to read with avidity, but was utterly mystified. What emperor was this? Probably the Tsar or the Emperor of Austria, for there was no German Emperor in those days. But no! It was evidently the Emperor of the French. And how did Napoleon get to Wilhelmshöhe? The French must have broken through the Rhine defences, and pushed far into Germany. But no! As I read further, I found this theory equally untenable. It turned out that the Emperor was surrounded by Germans, and—a prisoner! In order to solve the mystery, I had to go back to the preceding numbers of the paper, and learned, at a sitting, all about the successive German victories, the affair of Sedan, and the other great events of that momentous time. The impression produced can scarcely be realised by those who have always imbibed current history in the homœopathic doses administered by the successive editions of the daily papers.

By the useful loquacity of my teacher and the possibility of devoting all my time to my linguistic studies, I made such rapid progress in the acquisition of the language, that I was able after a few weeks to understand much of what was said to me, and to express

myself in a vague, roundabout way. In the latter operation I was much assisted by a peculiar faculty of divination which the Russians possess in a high degree. If a foreigner succeeds in expressing about one-fourth of an idea, the Russian peasant can generally fill up the remaining three-fourths from his own intuition.

As my powers of comprehension increased, my long conversations with the priest became more and more interesting. At first his remarks and stories had for me simply a philological interest, but gradually I perceived that his talk contained a great deal of solid, interesting information regarding himself and the class to which he belonged—information of a kind not commonly found in grammatical exercises. Some of this I now propose to communicate to the reader.

CHAPTER IV.

THE VILLAGE PRIEST.

Priests' Names—Clerical Marriages—The White and the Black Clergy—Why the People do not respect the Parish Priests—History of the White Clergy—The Parish Priest and the Protestant Pastor—In what sense the Russian People are Religious—Icons—The Clergy and Popular Education—Ecclesiastical Reform.

In formal introductions it is customary to pronounce in a more or less inaudible voice the names of the two persons introduced. Circumstances compel me in the present case to depart from received custom. The truth is, I do not know the names of the two people whom I wish to introduce to each other! The reader who knows his own name will readily pardon one-half of my ignorance, but he may naturally expect that I should know the name of a man with whom I profess to be acquainted, and with whom I held long conversations during a period of several months. Strange as it may seem, I do not. During all the time of my sojourn in Ivánofka I never heard *him* addressed or spoken of otherwise than as "Bátushka." Now "Bátushka" is not a name at all. It is simply the diminutive form of an obsolete word meaning "father," and is usually applied to all village priests. The *ushka* is a common diminutive termination, and the root *Bat* is evidently the same as that which appears in the Latin *pater*.

Though I do not happen to know what Bátushka's family name was, I can communicate two curious facts

concerning it: he had not possessed it in his childhood, and it was not the same as his father's.

The reader whose intuitive powers have been preternaturally sharpened by a long course of sensation novels will probably leap to the conclusion that Bátushka was a mysterious individual, very different from what he seemed—either the illegitimate son of some great personage, or a man of high birth who had committed some great sin, and who now sought oblivion and expiation in the humble duties of a parish priest. Let me dispel at once all delusions of this kind. Bátushka was actually as well as legally the legitimate son of an ordinary parish priest, who was still living about twenty miles off, and for many generations all his paternal and maternal ancestors, male and female, had belonged to the priestly caste. He was thus a Levite of the purest water, and thoroughly Levitical in his character. Though he knew by experience something about the weakness of the flesh, he had never committed any sins of the heroic kind, and had no reason to conceal his origin. The curious facts above stated were simply the result of a peculiar custom which exists among the Russian clergy. According to this custom, when a boy enters the seminary he receives from the Bishop a new family name. The name may be Bogoslafski, from a word signifying "Theology," or Bogolubof, "the love of God," or some similar term; or it may be derived from the name of the boy's native village, or from any other word which the Bishop thinks fit to choose. I know of one instance where a Bishop chose two French words for the purpose.

He had intended to call the boy Velikoselski, after his native place, Velikoe Selo, which means "big village;" but finding that there was already a Velikoselski in the seminary, and being in a facetious frame of mind, he called the new comer Grandvillageski—a word that may perhaps sorely puzzle some philologist of the future.

My reverend teacher was a tall muscular man of about forty years of age, with a full dark-brown beard, and long lank hair falling over his shoulders. The visible parts of his dress consisted of three articles—a dingy-brown robe of coarse material buttoned closely at the neck, and descending to the ground, a wideawake hat, and a pair of large heavy boots. As to the esoteric parts of his attire, I refrained from making investigations. His life had been an uneventful one. At an early age he had been sent to the seminary in the chief town of the province, and had made for himself the reputation of a good average scholar. "The seminary of that time," he used to say to me, referring to that part of his life, "was not what it is now. Nowadays the teachers talk about humanitarianism, and the boys would think that a crime had been committed against human dignity if one of them happened to be flogged. But they don't consider that human dignity is at all affected by their getting drunk, and going to—to—to places that I never went to. I was flogged often enough, and I don't think that I am a worse man on that account; and though I never heard then anything about pedagogical science that they talk so much about now, I'll read a bit of Latin yet with the best of them."

"When my studies were finished," said Bátushka, continuing the simple story of his life, "the Bishop found a wife for me, and I succeeded her father, who was then an old man. In that way I became priest of Ivánofka, and have remained here ever since. It is a hard life, for the parish is big, and my bit of land is not very fertile, but, praise be to God! I am healthy and strong, and get on well enough."

"You said that the Bishop found a wife for you," I remarked. "I suppose therefore that he was a great friend of yours."

"Not at all. The Bishop does the same for all the seminarists who wish to be ordained: it is an important part of his pastoral duties."

"Indeed!" I exclaimed in astonishment. "Surely that is carrying the system of paternal government a little too far. Why should his Reverence meddle with things that don't concern him?"

"But these matters do concern him. He is the natural protector of widows and orphans, especially among the clergy of his own diocese. When a parish priest dies, what is to become of his wife and daughters?"

Not perceiving clearly the exact bearing of these last remarks, I ventured to suggest that priests ought to economise in view of future contingencies.

"It is easy to speak," replied Bátushka: "'A story is soon told,' as the old proverb has it, 'but a thing is not soon done.' How are we to economise? Even without saving we have the greatest difficulty to make both ends meet."

"Then the widow and daughters might work and gain a livelihood."

"What, pray, could they work at?" asked Bátushka, and paused for a reply. Seeing that I had none to offer him, he continued, "Even the house and land do not belong to them, but to the new priest."

"If that position occurred in a novel," I said, "I could foretell what would happen. The author would make the new priest fall in love with and marry one of the daughters, and then the whole family, including the mother-in-law, would live happily ever afterwards."

"That is exactly how the Bishop arranges the matter. What the novelist does with the lifeless puppets of his imagination, the Bishop does with real beings of flesh and blood. As a rational being, however, he cannot leave things to chance. Besides this, he must arrange the matter before the young man takes orders, because, by the rules of the Church, the marriage cannot take place after the ceremony of ordination. When the affair is arranged before the charge becomes vacant, the old priest can die with the pleasant consciousness that his family is provided for."

"Well, Bátushka, you certainly put the matter in a very plausible way, but there seem to be two flaws in the analogy. The novelist can make two people fall in love with each other, and make them live happily together with the mother-in-law, but that—with all due respect to his Reverence be it said—is beyond the power of a Bishop."

"I don't know," said Bátushka, avoiding the point of the objection, "that love-marriages are always the happiest ones; and as to the mother-in-law, there are—or at least there were until the Emancipation of the serfs—a mother-in-law and several daughters-in-law in almost every peasant household."

"And does harmony generally reign in peasant households?"

"That depends upon the head of the house. If he is a man of the right sort, he can keep the women-folks in order." This remark was made in an energetic tone, with the evident intention of assuring me that the speaker was himself "a man of the right sort," but I did not attribute much importance to it, for I have often observed that hen-pecked husbands habitually talk in this way when their wives are out of hearing. Altogether I was by no means convinced that the system of providing for the widows and orphans of the clergy by means of *mariages de convenance* was a good one, but I determined to suspend my judgment until I should receive further information.

An additional bit of evidence came to me a week or two later. One morning, on going into the priest's house, I found that he had a friend with him—the priest of a village some fifteen miles off. Before we had got through the ordinary conventional remarks about the weather and the crops, a peasant drove up to the door in his cart with a message that an old peasant was dying in a neighbouring village, and desired the last consolations of religion. Bátushka was thus

obliged to leave us, and his friend and I agreed to stroll leisurely in the direction of the village to which he was going, so as to meet him on his way home. The harvest was already finished, so that our road, after emerging from the village, lay through stubble-fields. Beyond this we entered the pine forest, and by the time we had reached this point I had succeeded in leading the conversation to the subject of clerical marriages.

"I have been thinking a good deal on this subject," I said, "and I should very much like to know your opinion about the system."

My new acquaintance was a tall, lean, black-haired man, with a sallow complexion and vinegar aspect—evidently one of those unhappy mortals who are intended by Nature to take a pessimistic view of all things, and to point out to their fellows the deep shadows of human life. I was not at all surprised, therefore, when he replied in a deep, decided tone, "Bad, very bad—utterly bad!"

The way in which these words were pronounced left no doubt as to the opinion of the speaker, but I was desirous of knowing on what that opinion was founded —more especially as I seemed to detect in the tone a note of personal grievance. My answer was shaped accordingly.

"I suspected that; but in the discussions which I have had I have always been placed at a disadvantage, not being able to adduce any definite facts in support of my opinion."

"You may congratulate yourself on being unable to

find any in your own experience. A mother-in-law living in the house does not conduce to domestic harmony. I don't know how it is in your country, but so it is with us."

I hastened to assure him that this was not a peculiarity of Russia.

"I know it only too well," he continued. "My mother-in-law lived with me for some years, and I was obliged at last to insist on her going to another son-in-law."

"Rather selfish conduct towards your brother-in-law," I said to myself, and then added audibly, "I hope you have thus solved the difficulty satisfactorily."

"Not at all. Things are worse now than they were. I agreed to pay her three roubles a month, and have regularly fulfilled my promise, but lately she has thought it not enough, and has made a complaint to the Bishop. Last week I went to him to defend myself, but as I had not money enough for all the officials in the Consistorium, I could not obtain justice. My mother-in-law had made all sorts of absurd accusations against me, and consequently I was laid under an inhibition for six weeks!"

"And what is the effect of an inhibition?"

"The effect is that I cannot perform the ordinary rites of our religion. It is really very unjust," he added, assuming an indignant tone, "and very annoying. Think of all the hardship and inconvenience to which it gives rise."

As I thought of the hardship and inconvenience to

which the parishioners must be exposed through the inconsiderate conduct of the old mother-in-law, I could not but sympathise with my new acquaintance's indignation. My sympathy was, however, somewhat cooled when I perceived that I was on a wrong tack, and that the priest was looking at the matter from an entirely different point of view.

"You see," he said, "it is a most unfortunate time of year. The peasants have gathered in their harvest, and can give of their abundance. There are merry-makings and marriages, besides the ordinary deaths and baptisms. Altogether I shall lose by the thing more than a hundred roubles!"

I confess I was a little shocked at hearing the priest thus speak of his sacred functions as if they were an ordinary marketable commodity, and talk of the inhibition as a pushing undertaker might talk of sanitary improvements. My surprise was caused not by the fact that he regarded the matter from a pecuniary point of view—for I was old enough to know that clerical human nature is not altogether insensible to pecuniary considerations—but by the fact that he should thus undisguisedly express his opinions to a stranger without in the least suspecting that there was anything unseemly in his way of speaking. The incident appeared to me very characteristic, but I refrained from all audible comments, lest I should unexpectedly check his communicativeness. With the view of encouraging it, I professed to be very much interested, as I really was, in what he said, and I asked him how in his opinion

the present unsatisfactory state of things might be remedied.

"There is but one cure," he said, with a readiness that showed he had often spoken on the theme already, "and that is freedom and publicity. We full-grown men are treated like children, and watched like conspirators. If we wish to preach a sermon we are expected to show it first to the Blagotchinny, and——"

"I beg your pardon, who is the Blagotchinny?"

"The Blagotchinny is a parish priest, who is in direct relations with the Consistorium of the Province, and who is supposed to exercise a strict supervision over all the other parish priests of his district. He acts as the spy of the Consistorium, which is filled with greedy, shameless officials, who are deaf to any one who does not come provided with a handful of roubles. The Bishop may be a good, well-intentioned man, but he always sees and acts through these worthless subordinates. Besides this, the Bishops and heads of monasteries, who monopolise the higher places in the ecclesiastical Administration, all belong to the Black Clergy—that is to say, they are all monks—and consequently cannot understand our wants. How can they, on whom celibacy is imposed by the rules of the Church, understand the position of a parish priest who has to bring up a family and to struggle with domestic cares of every kind? What they do is to take all the comfortable places for themselves, and leave us all the hard work. The monasteries are rich enough, and you see how poor we are. Perhaps you have heard that the parish priests extort money

from the peasants—refusing to perform the rites of baptism or burial until a considerable sum has been paid. It is only too true, but who is to blame? The priest must live and bring up his family, and you cannot imagine the humiliations to which he has to submit in order to gain a scanty pittance. I know it by experience. When I make the periodical visitation I can see that the peasants grudge every handful of rye and every egg that they give me. I can overhear their sneers as I go away, and I know they have many sayings such as—'The priest takes from the living and from the dead.' Many of them fasten their doors, pretending to be away from home, and do not even take the precaution of keeping silent till I am out of hearing."

"You surprise me," I said, in reply to the last part of this long tirade; "I have always heard that the Russians are a very religious people—at least, the lower classes."

"So they are; but the peasantry are poor and heavily taxed. They set great importance on the sacraments, and observe rigorously the fasts, which comprise nearly a half of the year, but they show very little respect for their priests, who are almost as poor as themselves."

"But I do not see clearly how you propose to remedy this state of things."

"By freedom and publicity, as I said before." The worthy man seemed to have learned this formula by rote. "First of all, our wants must be made known. In some provinces there have been attempts to do this

by means of provincial assemblies of the clergy, but these efforts have always been strenuously opposed by the Consistories, whose members fear publicity above all things. But in order to have publicity we must have more freedom."

Here followed a long discourse on freedom and publicity, which seemed to me very confused. So far as I could understand the argument, there was a good deal of reasoning in a circle. Freedom was necessary in order to get publicity, and publicity was necessary in order to get freedom; and the practical result would be that the clergy would enjoy bigger salaries and more popular respect. We had only got this length in the investigation of the subject, when our conversation was interrupted by the rumbling of a peasant's cart. In a few seconds our friend appeared, and the conversation took a different turn.

Since that time I have frequently spoken on this subject with competent authorities, and nearly all have admitted that the present condition of the clergy is highly unsatisfactory, and that the parish priest rarely enjoys the respect of his parishioners. In a semi-official report, which I once accidentally stumbled upon when searching for material of a different kind, the facts are stated in the following plain language: "The people"—I seek to translate as literally as possible—"do not respect the clergy, but persecute them with derision and reproaches, and feel them to be a burden. In nearly all the popular comic stories the priest, his wife, or his labourer is held up to ridicule, and in

all the proverbs and popular sayings where the clergy are mentioned it is always with derision. The people shun the clergy, and have recourse to them not from the inner impulse of conscience, but from necessity. . . . And why do the people not respect the clergy? Because it forms a class apart; because, having received a false kind of education, it does not introduce into the life of the people the teaching of the Spirit, but remains in the mere dead forms of outward ceremonial, at the same time despising these forms even to blasphemy; because the clergy itself continually presents examples of want of respect to religion, and transforms the service of God into a profitable trade. Can the people respect the clergy when they hear how one priest stole money from below the pillow of a dying man at the moment of confession, how another was publicly dragged out of a house of ill-fame, how a third christened a dog, how a fourth whilst officiating at the Easter service was dragged by the hair from the altar by the deacon? Is it possible for the people to respect priests who spend their time in the gin-shop, write fraudulent petitions, fight with the cross in their hands, and abuse each other in bad language at the altar? One might fill several pages with examples of this kind—in each instance naming the time and place—without overstepping the boundaries of the province of Nizhni-Novgorod. Is it possible for the people to respect the clergy when they see everywhere amongst them simony, carelessness in performing the religious rites, and disorder

in administering the sacraments? Is it possible for the people to respect the clergy when they see that truth has disappeared from it, and that the Consistories, guided in their decisions not by rules, but by personal friendship and bribery, destroy in it the last remains of truthfulness? If we add to all this the false certificates which the clergy give to those who do not wish to partake of the Eucharist, the dues illegally extracted from the Old Ritualists, the conversion of the altar into a source of revenue, the giving of churches to priests' daughters as a dowry, and similar phenomena, the question as to whether the people can respect the clergy requires no answer."

As these words were written by an orthodox Russian,* celebrated for his extensive and intimate knowledge of Russian provincial life, and were addressed in all seriousness to a member of the Imperial family, we may safely assume that they contain a considerable amount of truth. The reader must not, however, imagine that all Russian priests are of the kind above referred to. Many of them are honest, respectable, well-intentioned men, who conscientiously fulfil their humble duties, and strive hard to procure a good education for their children. If they have less learning, culture, and refinement than the Roman Catholic priesthood, they have at the same time infinitely less fanaticism, less spiritual pride, and less intolerance towards the adherents of other faiths.

Both the good and the bad qualities of the Russian priesthood at the present time can be easily explained

* Mr. Melnikof, in a "secret" Report to the Grand Duke Constantine.

by its past history, and by certain peculiarities of the national character.

The Russian White Clergy—that is to say, the parish priests, as distinguished from the monks, who are called the Black Clergy—have had a curious history. In early times they were drawn from all classes of the population, and freely elected by the parishioners. When a man was elected by the popular vote, he was presented to the Bishop, and if he was found to be a fit and proper person for the office, he was at once ordained. But very soon this custom fell into disuse. The Bishops, finding that many of the candidates presented were illiterate peasants, gradually assumed the right of appointing the priests, with or without the consent of the parishioners; and their choice generally fell on the sons of the clergy as the men best fitted to take orders. The creation of Bishops' schools, afterwards called seminaries, in which the sons of the clergy were educated, naturally led, in the course of time, to the total exclusion of the other classes. At the same time, the policy of the civil Government led to the same end. Peter the Great laid down the principle that every subject should in some way serve the State—the nobles as officers in the army or navy, or as officials in the civil service; the clergy as ministers of religion; and the lower classes as soldiers, sailors, or tax-payers. Of these three classes, the clergy had by far the lightest burdens to bear, and consequently many nobles and peasants would willingly have entered its ranks. But this species of desertion the Government could not tolerate, and accordingly the priesthood was

surrounded by a legal barrier, which prevented all outsiders from entering it. Thus by the combined efforts of the ecclesiastical and the civil Administration the clergy became a separate class or caste, legally and actually incapable of mingling with the other classes of the population.

The simple fact that the clergy became an exclusive caste, with a peculiar character, peculiar habits, and peculiar ideals, would in itself have had a prejudicial influence on the priesthood; but this was not all. The caste increased in numbers by the process of natural reproduction much more rapidly than the offices to be filled, so that the supply of priests and deacons soon far exceeded the demand; and the disproportion between supply and demand became every year greater and greater. Thus was formed an ever-increasing clerical Proletariate, which—as is always the case with a Proletariate of any kind—gravitated towards the towns. In vain the Government issued ukazes prohibiting the priests from quitting their places of domicile, and treated as vagrants and runaways those who disregarded the prohibition; in vain successive sovereigns endeavoured to diminish the number of these supernumeraries by drafting them wholesale into the army. In Moscow, St. Petersburg, and all the larger towns, the cry was still, "They come!" Every morning, in the kremlin of Moscow, a large crowd of them assembled for the purpose of being hired to officiate in the private chapels of the rich nobles, and a great deal of hard bargaining took place between the priests and the lackeys sent to hire them—

conducted in the same spirit, and in nearly the same forms, as that which simultaneously took place in the bazaar close by between extortionate traders and thrifty housewives. "Listen to me," a priest would say, as an ultimatum, to a lackey who was trying to beat down the price; "if you don't give me seventy-five kopeks without further ado, I'll take a bite of this roll, and that will be an end to it!" And that would have been an end to the proceedings, for, according to the rules of the Church, a priest cannot officiate after breaking his fast. The ultimatum, however, could be used with effect only to country servants who had recently come to town. A sharp lackey, experienced in this kind of diplomacy, would have laughed at the threat, and replied coolly, "Bite away, Bátushka; I can find plenty more of your sort!" Amusing scenes of this kind I have heard described by old people who professed to have been eye-witnesses.

The condition of the priests who remained in the villages was not much better. Those of them who were fortunate enough to find places were raised at least above the fear of absolute destitution, but their position was by no means enviable. They received little consideration or respect from the peasantry, and still less from the nobles. When the church was situated not on the State Demesnes, but on a private estate, they were practically under the power of the proprietor—almost as completely as his serfs; and sometimes that power was exercised in a most humiliating and shameful way. I have heard, for instance, of one priest who was ducked in the pond on a

cold winter day for the amusement of the proprietor and his guests—choice spirits, of rough, jovial temperament; and of another who, having neglected to take off his hat as he passed the proprietor's house, was put into a barrel and rolled down a hill into the river at the bottom!

In citing these incidents, I do not at all mean to imply that they represent the relations which usually existed between proprietors and village priests, for I am quite aware that wanton cruelty was not among the ordinary vices of Russian serf-owners. My object in mentioning the incidents is to show how a brutal proprietor—and it must be admitted that there were not a few brutal individuals in the class—could treat a priest without much danger of being called to account for his conduct. Of course such conduct was an offence in the eyes of the criminal law; but the criminal law of that time was very short-sighted, and strongly disposed to close its eyes completely when the offender was an influential proprietor, and the victim merely a village priest. Had the incidents reached the ears of the Emperor Nicholas, he would probably have ordered the culprit to be summarily and severely punished; but, as the Russian proverb has it, "the Heaven is high, and the Tsar is far off." A village priest treated in this barbarous way could have little hope of redress, and, if he were a prudent man, he would make no attempt to obtain it; for any annoyance which he might give the proprietor by complaining to the ecclesiastical authorities would be sure to be paid back to him with interest in some indirect way.

The sons of the clergy who did not succeed in finding regular sacerdotal employment were in a still worse position. Many of them served as scribes or subordinate officials in the public offices, where they commonly eked out their scanty salaries by unblushing extortion and pilfering. Those who did not succeed in gaining even modest employment of this kind had to keep off starvation by less lawful means, and not unfrequently found their way into the prisons or to Siberia.

In judging of the Russian priesthood of the present time, we must call to mind this severe school through which it has passed, and we must also take into consideration the spirit which has been for centuries predominant in the Eastern Church—I mean the strong tendency both in the clergy and in the laity to attribute an inordinate importance to the ceremonial element of religion. Primitive mankind is everywhere and always disposed to regard religion as simply a mass of mysterious rites, which have a secret magical power of averting evil in this world and securing felicity in the next. To this general rule the Russian peasantry are no exception, and the Russian Church has not done all it might have done to eradicate this conception and to bring religion into closer association with ordinary morality. Hence such incidents as the following are still possible. A robber kills and rifles a traveller, but refrains from eating a piece of cooked meat which he finds in the cart, because it happens to be a fast-day! A peasant prepares to rob a young *attaché* of the

Austrian Embassy in St. Petersburg, and ultimately kills his victim, but before going to the house he enters a church and commends his undertaking to the protection of the saints!! A housebreaker, when in the act of robbing a church, finds it difficult to extract the jewels from an Icon, and makes a vow that if a certain saint assists him he will place a rouble's-worth of tapers before the saint's image!!

All these are of course extreme cases, but they illustrate a tendency which in its milder forms is only too general amongst the Russian people—the tendency to regard religion as a mass of ceremonies which have a magical rather than a spiritual significance. The poor woman who kneels at a religious procession in order that the Icon may be carried over her head, and the rich merchant who invites the priests to bring some famous Icon to his house, illustrate this tendency in a more harmless way.

According to a popular saying, "as is the priest, so is the parish," and the converse proposition is equally true—as is the parish, so is the priest. The great majority of priests, like the great majority of men in general, content themselves with simply striving to perform what is expected of them, and their character is consequently determined to a certain extent by the ideas and conceptions of their parishioners. This will become more apparent if we contrast the Russian priest with the Protestant pastor.

According to Protestant conceptions, the village pastor is a man of grave demeanour and exemplary

conduct, and possesses a certain amount of education and refinement. He ought to expound weekly to his flock, in simple, impressive words, the great truths of Christianity, and exhort his hearers to walk in the paths of righteousness. Besides this, he is expected to comfort the afflicted, to assist the needy, to counsel those who are harassed with doubts, and to admonish those who openly stray from the narrow path. Such is the ideal in the popular mind, and nearly all pastors seek to realise it, if not in very deed, at least in appearance. The Russian priest, on the contrary, has no such ideal set before him by his parishioners. He is expected merely to conform to certain observances and to perform punctiliously the rites and ceremonies prescribed by the Church. If he does this without practising extortion, his parishioners are quite satisfied. He rarely preaches or exhorts, and neither has nor seeks to have a moral influence over his flock. I have occasionally heard of Russian priests who approach to what I have termed the Protestant ideal, but I must confess that I have never seen any of them, and I venture to assert that their number is comparatively small.

In the above contrast I have accidentally omitted one important feature. The Protestant clergy have in all countries rendered valuable service to the cause of popular education. The reason of this is not difficult to find. In order to be a good Protestant it is necessary to "search the Scriptures," and to do this one must be able at least to read. To be a good member of the Greek Orthodox Church, on the contrary, according to popular

conceptions, the reading of the Scriptures is not necessary, and therefore primary education has not in the eyes of the Greek Orthodox priest the same importance which it has in the eyes of the Protestant pastor.

It must be admitted that the Russian people are in a certain sense religious. They go regularly to church on Sundays and holy-days, cross themselves repeatedly when they pass a church or Icon, take the Holy Communion at stated seasons, rigorously abstain from animal food—not only on Wednesdays and Fridays, but also during Lent and the other long fasts—make occasional pilgrimages to holy shrines, and, in a word, fulfil punctiliously all the ceremonial observances which they suppose necessary for salvation. But here their religiousness ends. They are generally profoundly ignorant of religious doctrine, and know little or nothing of Holy Writ. A peasant, it is said, was once asked by a priest if he could name the three Persons of the Trinity, and replied without a moment's hesitation, "How can one not know that, Bátushka? Of course it is the Saviour, the Mother of God, and Saint Nicholas the miracle-worker!" That answer represents fairly enough the theological attainments of a very large section of the peasantry. The anecdote is so well known and so often repeated that it is probably an invention, but it is not a calumny. Of theology and of what Protestants term the "inner religious life," the Russian peasant has no conception. For him the ceremonial part of religion suffices, and he has the most unbounded, childlike confidence in the saving efficacy of the rites which

he practises. If he has been baptised in infancy, has regularly observed the fasts, has annually partaken of the Holy Communion, and has just confessed and received extreme unction, he feels death approach with the most perfect tranquillity. He is tormented with no doubts as to the efficacy of faith or works, and has no fears that his past life may possibly have rendered him unfit for eternal felicity. Like a man in a sinking ship who has buckled on his life-preserver, he feels perfectly secure. With no fear for the future and little regret for the present or the past, he awaits calmly the dread summons, and dies with a resignation which a Stoic philosopher might envy.

In the above paragraph I have used the word Icon, and perhaps the reader may not clearly understand the word. Let me explain then, briefly, what an Icon is—a very necessary explanation, for the Icons play an important part in the religious observances of the Russian people.

Icons are pictorial half-length representations of the Saviour, of the Madonna, or of a saint, executed in archaic Byzantine style, on a yellow or gold ground, and varying in size from a square inch to several square feet. Very often the whole picture, with the exception of the face and hands of the figure, is covered with a metal *plaque*, embossed so as to represent the form of the figure and the drapery. When this *plaque* is not used, the crown and costume are often adorned with pearls and other precious stones—sometimes of great price.

A careful examination of Icons belonging to various

periods has led me to the conclusion that they were originally simple pictures, and that the metallic *plaque* is a modern innovation. The first departure from purely pictorial representation seems to have been the habit of placing on the head of the painted figure a piece of ornamental gold-work, sometimes set with precious stones, to represent a nimbus or a crown. This strange, and to our minds barbarous, method of combining painting with *haut-relief*—if such a term may be applied to this peculiar kind of decoration—was afterwards gradually extended to the various parts of the costume, until only the face and hands of the figure remained visible, when it was found convenient to unite these various ornaments with the gilt background into a single embossed plate.

In respect of religious significance, Icons are of two kinds: simple, and miraculous or miracle-working (*tchudotvorny*). The former are manufactured in enormous quantities—chiefly in the province of Vladimir, where whole villages are employed in this kind of work —and are to be found in every Russian house, from the hut of the peasant to the palace of the Emperor. They are generally placed high up in a corner facing the door, and good orthodox Christians on entering bow in that direction, making at the same time the sign of the cross. Before and after meals the same short ceremony is always performed. On the eve of fête-days a small lamp is kept burning before at least one of the Icons in the house.

The wonder-working Icons are comparatively few in

number, and are always carefully preserved in a church or chapel. They are commonly believed to have been "not made with hands," and to have appeared in a miraculous way. A monk, or it may be a common mortal, has a vision, in which he is informed that he may find a miraculous Icon in such a place, and on going to the spot indicated he finds it, sometimes buried, sometimes hanging on a tree. The sacred treasure is then removed to a church, and the news spreads like wildfire through the district. Thousands flock to prostrate themselves before the heaven-sent picture, and some of them are healed of their diseases—a fact that plainly indicates its miracle-working power. The whole affair is then officially reported to the Most Holy Synod—the highest ecclesiastical authority in Russia under the Emperor—in order that the existence of the miracle-working power may be fully and regularly proved. The official recognition of the fact is by no means a mere matter of form, for the Synod is well aware that wonder-working Icons are always a rich source of revenue to the monasteries where they are kept, and that zealous Superiors are consequently apt in such cases to lean to the side of credulity, rather than that of over-severe criticism. A regular investigation is therefore made, and the formal recognition is not granted till the testimony of the finder is thoroughly examined and the alleged miracles duly authenticated. If the recognition is granted, the Icon is treated with the greatest veneration, and is sure to be visited by pilgrims from far and near.

Some of the most revered Icons—as, for instance, the Kazan Madonna—have annual fête-days instituted in their honour; or, more correctly speaking, the anniversary of their miraculous appearance is observed as a religious holiday. A few of them have an additional title to popular respect and veneration: that of being intimately associated with great events in the national history. The Vladimir Madonna, for example, once saved Moscow from the Tartars; the Smolensk Madonna accompanied the army in the glorious campaign against Napoleon in 1812; and when in that year it was known in Moscow that the French were advancing on the city, the people wished the Metropolitan to take the Iberian Madonna, which may still be seen near one of the gates of the kremlin, and to lead them out armed with hatchets against the enemy.

If the Russian priests have done little to advance popular education, they have at least never intentionally opposed it. Unlike their Roman Catholic brethren, they do not hold that "a little learning is a dangerous thing," and do not fear that faith may be endangered by knowledge. Indeed, it is a remarkable fact that the Russian Church regards with profound apathy those various intellectual movements which at present cause serious alarm to many thoughtful Christians in Western Europe. Why this is so, I may perhaps endeavour to explain at some future time. It is a difficult subject, which cannot be dismissed in a few sentences.

Though the unsatisfactory condition of the parochial lergy is generally recognised by the educated classes

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very few people take the trouble to consider seriously how it might be improved. During the Reform enthusiasm which raged at the commencement of the present reign, ecclesiastical affairs received almost no attention; and at present, when the storm has passed and apathy prevails, they receive still less. The truth is that educated Russians, as a rule, take no interest in Church matters, and not a few of them are so very far "advanced" that they regard religion in all its forms as an old-world superstition, which should be allowed to die as tranquilly as possible. The Government has, however, done something towards improving the condition of the parish priests. Many of the barriers which tended to make the priesthood a caste have been broken down, and hundreds of priests' sons are now making their way in the Civil Service, in the Judicial Administration, as Professors in the Universities, and in various industrial undertakings. In addition to this, an attempt is at present being made to diminish the number of parishes, and thereby to ameliorate the condition of the incumbents. These changes will, I believe, ultimately produce beneficial results, but long years must elapse before the spirit with which the class is animated can undergo a radical modification.

CHAPTER V.

A MEDICAL CONSULTATION.

Unexpected Illness—A Village Doctor—Siberian Plague—My Studies—Russian Historians—A Russian Imitator of Dickens—A *ci-devant* Domestic Serf—Medicine and Witchcraft—A Remnant of Paganism—Credulity of the Peasantry—Absurd Rumours—A Mysterious Visit from St. Barbara—Cholera on Board a Steamer—Hospitals—Lunatic Asylums—Amongst Maniacs.

In enumerating the requisites for travelling in the less frequented parts of Russia, I omitted to mention one important condition: the traveller must make up his mind to be always in good health, and in case of illness to dispense with regular medical attendance. This I learned by experience during my stay at Ivánofka.

A man who is accustomed to be always well, and has consequently cause to believe himself exempt from the ordinary ills that flesh is heir to, naturally feels aggrieved—as if some one had inflicted upon him an undeserved injury—when he suddenly finds himself ill. At first he refuses to believe the fact, and, as far as possible, takes no notice of the disagreeable symptoms.

Such was my state of mind on being awakened early one morning by peculiar symptoms which I had never before experienced. Unwilling to admit to myself the possibility of being ill, I got up, and endeavoured to dress as usual, but very soon discovered that I was unable to stand. There was no denying the fact: not only was I ill, but the malady, whatever it was, surpassed my

powers of diagnosis; and when the symptoms increased steadily all that day and the following night, I was constrained to take the humiliating decision of asking for medical advice. To my inquiries whether there was a doctor in the neighbourhood, the old servant replied, "There is not exactly a doctor, but there is a Feldsher in the village."

"And what is a Feldsher?"

"A Feldsher is . . . . is a Feldsher."

"I am quite aware of that, but I should like to know what you mean by the word. What is this Feldsher?"

"He's an old soldier who dresses wounds and gives physic."

The definition did not dispose me in favour of the mysterious personage, but as there was nothing better to be had I ordered him to be sent for, notwithstanding the strenuous opposition of the old servant, who evidently did not believe in Feldshers.

In about half an hour a tall, broad-shouldered man entered, and stood bolt upright in the middle of the room in the attitude which is designated in military language by the word "Attention." His clean-shaven chin, long moustache, and closely-cropped hair confirmed one part of the old servant's definition; he was unmistakably an old soldier.

"You are a Feldsher," I said, making use of the word which I had recently added to my vocabulary.

"Exactly so, your Nobility!" These words, the ordinary form of affirmation used by soldiers to their

officers, were pronounced in a loud, metallic, monotonous tone, as if the speaker had been an automaton conversing with a brother automaton at a distance of twenty yards. As soon as the words were pronounced the mouth of the machine closed spasmodically, and the head, which had been momentarily turned towards me, reverted to its former position with a jerk, as if it had received the order "Eyes front!"

"Then please to sit down here, and I'll tell you what is the matter with me." Upon this the figure took three paces to the front, wheeled to the right-about, and sat down on the edge of the chair, retaining the position of "Attention" as nearly as the sitting posture would allow. When the symptoms had been carefully described, he knitted his brows, and after some reflection remarked, "I can give you a dose of . . . ."—here followed a long word which I did not understand.

"I don't wish you to give me a dose of anything till I know what is the matter with me. Though a bit of a doctor myself, I have no idea what it is, and, pardon me, I think you are in the same position." Noticing a look of ruffled professional dignity on his face, I added, as a sedative, "It is evidently something very peculiar, so that if the first medical practitioner in the country were present he would probably be as much puzzled as ourselves."

The sedative evidently had the desired effect. "Well, sir, to tell you the truth," he said, in a more human tone of voice, "I do not clearly understand what it is."

"Exactly; and therefore I think we had better leave the cure to Nature, and not interfere with her mode of treatment."

"Perhaps it would be better."

"No doubt. And now, since I have to lie here on my back, and feel rather lonely, I should like to have a talk with you. You are not in a hurry, I hope?"

"Not at all. My assistant knows where I am, and will send for me if I am required."

"So you have an assistant, have you?"

"Oh yes; a very sharp young fellow, who has been two years in the Feldsher school, and has now come here to help me and learn more by practice. That is a new way. I never was at a school of the kind myself, but had to pick up what I could when a servant in the hospital. There were, I believe, no such schools in my time. The one where my assistant learned was opened by the Zemstvo."

"The Zemstvo is the new local administration, is it not?"

"Exactly so. And I could not do without the assistant," continued my new acquaintance, gradually losing his rigidity, and showing himself, what he really was, a kindly, talkative man. "I have often to go to other villages, and almost every day a number of peasants come here. At first I had very little to do, for the people thought I was an official, and would make them pay dearly for what I should give them; but now they know that they don't require to pay, and come in great numbers. And everything I give them—though

sometimes I don't clearly understand what the matter is—seems to do them good. I believe that faith does as much as physic."

"In my country," I remarked, "there is a sect of doctors who get the benefit of that principle. They give their patients two or three little balls no bigger than a pin's head, or a few drops of tasteless liquid, and they sometimes work wonderful cures."

"That system would not do for us. The Russian *muzhik* (peasant) would have no faith if he swallowed merely things of that kind. What he believes in is something with a very bad taste, and lots of it. That is his idea of a medicine; and he thinks that the more he takes of a medicine, the better chance he has of getting well. When I wish to give a peasant several doses I make him come for each separate dose, for I know that if I did not he would probably swallow the whole as soon as he was out of sight. But there is not much serious disease here—not like what I used to see on the Sheksná. You have been on the Sheksná?"

"Not yet, but I intend going there." The Sheksná is a river which falls into the Volga, and forms part of the great system of water-communication connecting the Volga with the Neva.

"When you go there you will see lots of diseases. If there is a hot summer, and plenty of barges passing, something is sure to break out—typhus, or black small-pox, or Siberian plague, or something of the kind. That Siberian plague is a curious thing. Whether it really comes from Siberia, God only knows. So soon as it

breaks out the horses die by dozens, and sometimes men and women are attacked, though it is not properly a human disease. They say that flies carry the poison from the dead horses to the people. The sign of it is a thing like a boil, with a dark-coloured rim. If this is cut open in time the person may recover, but if it is not the person dies. There is cholera, too, sometimes."

"What a delightful country," I said to myself, "for a young doctor who wishes to make discoveries in the science of disease!" The catalogue of diseases inhabiting this favoured region was apparently not yet complete, but it was cut short for the moment by the arrival of the assistant, with the announcement that his superior was wanted.

This first interview with the Feldsher was, on the whole, satisfactory. He had not rendered me any medical assistance, but he had helped me to pass an hour pleasantly, and had given me a little information of the kind I desired. My later interviews with him were equally agreeable. He was naturally an intelligent, observant man, who had seen a great deal of the Russian world, and could describe graphically what he had seen. Unfortunately the horizontal position to which I was condemned prevented me from noting down at the time the interesting things which he related to me. His visits, together with those of Karl Karl'itch, and of the priest, who kindly spent a great part of his time with me, helped me to while away many an hour which would otherwise have been dreary enough.

During the intervals, when I was alone, I devoted

myself to reading—sometimes Russian history and sometimes works of fiction. The history was that of Karamzin, who may fairly be called the Russian Livy. It interested me much by the facts which it contained, but irritated me not a little by the rhetorical style in which it is written. Afterwards, when I had waded through eighteen volumes of the gigantic work of Solovyoff—or Solovief, as the name is sometimes unphonetically written—which is simply a vast collection of valuable but undigested material, I was much less severe on the picturesque descriptions and ornate style of his illustrious predecessor. The first work of fiction which I read was a collection of tales by Grigorόvitch, which had been given to me by the author on my departure from St. Petersburg. These tales, descriptive of rural life in Russia, had been written, as the author afterwards admitted to me, under the influence of Dickens. Many of the little tricks and affectations which became painfully obtrusive in Dickens's later works, I had no difficulty in recognising under their Russian garb. In spite of these I found the book very pleasant reading, and received from it some new notions—to be afterwards verified, of course—about Russian peasant life.

One of these tales made a deep impression upon me, and now, after a lapse of more than six years, I can recall easily the chief incidents. The story opens with the description of a village in late autumn. It has been raining for some time heavily, and the road has become covered with a deep layer of black mud. An old woman—a small proprietor—is sitting at home with a friend,

drinking tea and trying to read the future by means of a pack of cards. This occupation is suddenly interrupted by the entrance of a female servant, who announces that she has discovered an old man, apparently very ill, lying in one of the outhouses. The old woman goes out to see her uninvited guest, and, being of a kindly nature, prepares to have him removed to a more comfortable place, and properly attended to; but her friend whispers to her that perhaps he is a vagrant, and the generous impulse is thereby checked. When it is discovered that the suspicion is only too well founded, and that the man has no passport, the old woman becomes thoroughly alarmed. Her imagination pictures to her the terrible consequences that would ensue if the police should discover that she had harboured a vagrant. All her little fortune might be extorted from her. And if the old man should happen to die in her house or farmyard! The possible consequences in that case were too horrible to be thought of. Not only might she lose everything, but she might even be dragged to prison. At the sight of these dangers the old woman forgets her tenderheartedness, and becomes inexorable. The old man, sick unto death though he be, must leave the premises instantly. Knowing full well that he will nowhere find a refuge, he walks forth into the cold, dark, stormy night, and next morning a dead body is found at a short distance from the village.

Why this story, which was not strikingly remarkable for artistic merit, impressed me so deeply I cannot well explain. Perhaps it was because I was myself ill at

the time, and imagined how terrible it would be to be turned out on the muddy road on a cold, wet October night. Besides this, the story interested me as illustrating the terror which the police inspired during the reign of Nicholas. The ingenious devices which they employed for extorting money formed the subject of many satirical sketches, written about the same time as the tale above mentioned. One of these, which I read shortly afterwards, has likewise remained in my memory. So far as I remember, the facts were as follows:—An officer of rural police, when driving on a country road, finds a dead body by the wayside. Congratulating himself on this bit of good luck, he proceeds to the nearest village, and lets the inhabitants know that all manner of legal proceedings will be taken against them, so that the supposed murderer may be discovered. The peasants are of course frightened, and give him a considerable sum of money in order that he may hush up the affair. An ordinary officer of police would have been quite satisfied with this ransom, but this officer was not an ordinary man, and was very much in need of money; he conceives therefore the brilliant idea of repeating the experiment. Taking up the dead body, he takes it away in his tarantass, and a few hours later declares to the inhabitants of a village some miles off that some of them have been guilty of murder, and that he intends to investigate the matter thoroughly. The peasants of course pay liberally in order to escape the investigation, and the rascally officer, emboldened by success, repeats the trick in different villages until he has gathered a large sum.

Very many tales and sketches of this kind were published during the first years of the present reign, when the long-pent-up indignation against the severe repressive régime of the Emperor Nicholas, and the incredible administrative abuses to which it gave rise, found for a time free expression. The public have now, however, become tired of this species of literature, and authors seek other subjects for the exercise of their satirical talents.

When I did not feel disposed to read, and had none of my regular visitors with me, I sometimes spent an hour or two in talking with the old man-servant who attended me. Anton was decidedly an old man, but what his age precisely was I never could discover; either he did not know himself, or he did not for some reason wish to tell me. In appearance he seemed about sixty, but from certain remarks which he made I concluded that he must be nearer seventy, though he had scarcely a grey hair on his head. As to who his father was he seemed, like the famous Topsy, to have no very clear ideas, but he had an advantage over Topsy with regard to his maternal ancestry. His mother had been a serf who had fulfilled for some time the functions of lady's maid, and after the death of her mistress had been promoted to a not clearly-defined position of responsibility in the household. That promotion had taken place some time about the end of the last or the commencement of the present century. Anton, too, had been promoted in his time. His first function in the household had been that of assistant-keeper of the tobacco-pipes, from which

humble office he had gradually risen to a position which may be roughly designated as that of butler. All this time he had been of course a serf, as his mother had been before him, but being naturally a man of sluggish intellect he had never thoroughly realised the fact, and had certainly never conceived the possibility of being anything different from what he was. His master was master, and he himself was Anton, obliged to obey his master, or at least conceal disobedience—these were long the main facts in his conception of the universe, and, as philosophers generally do with regard to fundamental facts or axioms, he had accepted them without examination. By means of these simple postulates he had led a tranquil life, untroubled by doubts, until the year 1861, when the so-called freedom was brought to Ivánofka. He himself had not gone to the church to hear Bátushka read the Tsar's manifesto, but his master, on returning from the ceremony, had called him and said, "Anton, you are free now, but the Tsar says you are to serve as you have done for two years longer."

To this startling announcement Anton had replied coolly, "Slushayus," or, as we should say, "Yes, sir," and without further comment had gone to fetch his master's breakfast; but what he saw and heard during the next few weeks had greatly troubled his old conceptions of human society and the fitness of things. From that time must be dated, I suppose, the expression of mental confusion which his face habitually wore.

The first thing that roused his indignation was the conduct of his fellow-servants. Nearly all the unmarried

ones seemed to be suddenly attacked by a peculiar matrimonial mania. The reason of this was that the new law expressly gave permission to the emancipated serfs to marry as they chose without the consent of their masters, and nearly all the unmarried adults hastened to take advantage of their newly-acquired privilege, though many of them had great difficulty in raising the capital necessary to pay the priest's fees. Then came the disorders among the peasantry, the death of the old master, and the removal of the family first to St. Petersburg, and afterwards to Germany. Anton's mind had never been of a very powerful order, and these great events had exercised a deleterious influence upon it. When Karl Karl'itch, at the expiry of the two years, informed him that he might now go where he chose, he replied, with a look of blank, unfeigned astonishment, "Where can I go to?" He had never conceived the possibility of being forced to earn his bread in some new way, and begged Karl Karl'itch to let him remain where he was. This request was readily granted, for Anton was an honest, faithful servant, and sincerely attached to the family, and it was accordingly arranged that he should receive a small monthly salary, and occupy an intermediate position between those of major-domo and head watch-dog.

Had Anton been transformed into a real watch-dog he could scarcely have slept more than he did. His power of sleeping, and his somnolence when he imagined he was awake, were his two most prominent characteristics. Out of consideration for his years and his love of

repose, I troubled him as little as possible; but even the small amount of service which I demanded he contrived to curtail in an ingenious way. The time and exertion required for traversing the intervening space between his own room and mine might, he thought, be more profitably employed; and accordingly he extemporised a bed in a small ante-chamber, close to my door, and took up there his permanent abode. If sonorous snoring be sufficient proof that the performer is asleep, then I venture to assert that Anton devoted about three-fourths of his time to sleeping, and a large part of the remaining fourth to yawning and elongated guttural ejaculations. At first this little arrangement considerably annoyed me, but I bore it patiently, and afterwards received my reward, for during my illness I found it very convenient to have an attendant within call. And I must do Anton the justice to say that he served me well in his own somnolent fashion. He seemed to have the faculty of hearing when asleep, and generally appeared in my room before he had succeeded in getting his eyes completely open.

Anton had never found time, during his long life, to form many opinions, but he had somehow imbibed or inhaled a few convictions, chiefly of a decidedly conservative kind, and one of these was that Feldshers were useless and dangerous members of society. Again and again he had advised me to have nothing to do with the one who visited me, and more than once he recommended to me an old woman of the name of Masha, who lived in a village a few miles off. Masha was what is known in

Russia as a Znakharka—that is to say, a woman who is half witch, half medical practitioner—the whole permeated with a strong leaven of knavery. According to Anton, she could effect by means of herbs and charms every possible cure short of raising from the dead, and even with regard to this last operation he refrained from expressing an opinion.

The idea of being subjected to a course of herbs and charms by an old woman, who probably knew very little about the hidden properties of either, did not seem to me inviting, and more than once I flatly refused to have recourse to such unhallowed means. On due consideration, however, I thought that a professional interview with the old witch would be rather amusing, and then a brilliant idea occurred to me! I should bring together the Feldsher and the Znakharka, who no doubt hated each other with a Kilkenny-cat hatred, and let them fight it out before me for the benefit of science and my own delectation. The evil propensities which before our enlightened age produced bull-baiting, cock-fighting, and pugilistic exhibitions are not yet, I fear, quite eradicated from human nature.

The more I thought of my project, the more I congratulated myself on having conceived a brilliant idea; but, alas! in this very imperfectly organised world of our's brilliant ideas are seldom realised, and in this case I was destined to be disappointed. Did the old woman's black art warn her of approaching danger, or was she simply actuated by a feeling of professional jealousy and considerations of professional etiquette? To this question

I can give no positive answer, but certain it is that she could not be induced to pay me a visit, and I was thus baulked of my expected amusement. I succeeded, however, in learning indirectly something about the old witch. She enjoyed among her neighbours that solid, durable kind of respect which is founded on vague, undefinable fear, and was believed to have effected many remarkable cures. In the treatment of syphilitic diseases, which are fearfully common among the Russian peasantry, she was supposed to be specially successful, and I have no doubt, from the vague descriptions which I received, that the charm which she employed in these cases was of a mercurial kind. Some time afterwards I saw one of her victims. Whether she had succeeded in destroying the poison I know not, but she had at least succeeded in destroying most completely the patient's teeth. How women of this kind obtain mercury, and how they have discovered its medicinal properties, I cannot explain. Neither can I explain how they have come to know the peculiar properties of ergot of rye, which they frequently employ for illicit purposes, familiar to all students of medical jurisprudence.

The Znakharka and the Feldsher represent two very different periods in the history of medical science—the magical and the scientific. The Russian peasantry have still many conceptions which belong to the former. The great majority of them are already quite willing, under ordinary circumstances, to use the scientific means of healing; but as soon as a violent epidemic breaks out, and the scientific means prove unequal to the occasion,

the old faith revives, and recourse is had to magical rites and incantations. Of these rites many are very curious. Here, for instance, is one which was performed in a village near which I happened to be living in the summer of 1871. Cholera had been raging in the district for some time. In the village in question no case had yet occurred, but the inhabitants feared that the dreaded visitor would soon arrive, and the following ingenious contrivance was adopted for warding off the danger. At midnight, when the male population was supposed to be asleep, all the maidens met in nocturnal costume, according to a preconcerted plan, in the outskirts of the village, and formed a procession. In front marched a girl, holding an Icon. Behind her came her companions, dragging a sokhá—the primitive plough commonly used by the peasantry—by means of a long rope. In this order the procession made the circuit of the entire village, and it was confidently believed that the cholera would not be able to overstep the magical circle thus described. Many of the males probably knew, or at least suspected, what was going on; but they prudently remained within doors, knowing well that if they should be caught peeping indiscreetly at the mystic ceremony, they would be unmercifully beaten by those who were taking part in it.

This custom is doubtless a remnant of old pagan superstitions. The introduction of the Icon is a modern innovation, which illustrates that curious blending of paganism and Christianity which is often to be met with in Russia, and of which I shall have more to say some other time.

Sometimes, when an epidemic breaks out, the panic produced takes a more dangerous form. The people suspect that it is the work of the doctors, or that some ill-disposed persons have poisoned the wells, and will not believe that their own habitual disregard of the most simple sanitary precautions amply accounts for the phenomenon. I know of one case where an itinerant photographer was severely maltreated in consequence of such suspicions; and once, in St. Petersburg, during the reign of Nicholas, a serious riot took place. The excited populace had already, it is said, thrown several doctors out of the windows of the hospital, when the Emperor arrived, unattended, in an open carriage, and quelled the disturbance by his simple presence, aided by his stentorian voice.

Of the ignorant credulity of the Russian peasantry I might relate many curious illustrations. The most absurd rumours sometimes awaken consternation throughout a whole district. One of the most common reports of this kind is that a female conscription is about to take place. About the time of the Duke of Edinburgh's marriage this report was specially frequent. A large number of young girls were to be sent, it was said, to England in a red ship. Why the ship was to be painted red, and what was to be done with the Russian maidens when they should arrive at their destination, I never succeeded in discovering. Perhaps it was that the people confounded Queen Victoria with the King of Dahomey, or imagined that we were about to adopt that potentate's peculiar military organisation; or perhaps it was, as one

peasant explained, simply because it was supposed that there were very few women in England. This false conception might have been corrected by a landed proprietor whom I once met, and from whom I learned that about one-third of the entire population of the British Isles was composed of unfortunate spinsters condemned to celibacy by the paucity of the male population.

The most amusing instance of credulity which I can recall was the following, related to me by a peasant-woman who came from the village in question. One day in winter, about the time of sunset, a peasant-family was startled by the entrance of a strange visitor—a female figure, dressed as St. Barbara is commonly represented in the religious pictures. All present were very much astonished by this apparition; but the figure told them, in a low, soft voice, to be of good cheer, for she was St. Barbara, and had come to honour them with a visit as a reward for their piety. The peasant thus favoured was not remarkable for his piety, but he did not consider it necessary to correct the mistake of his saintly visitor, and requested her to be seated. With perfect readiness she accepted the invitation, and began at once to discourse in an edifying way. Meanwhile the news of this wonderful apparition spread like wildfire, and all the inhabitants of the village, as well as those of a neighbouring village about a mile distant, collected in and around the house of the favoured family. Whether the priest was among those who came my informant did not know. Many of those who had come could not get within hearing, but those at the outskirts of the crowd hoped

that the saint might come out before disappearing. Their hopes were gratified. About midnight the mysterious visitor announced that she would go and bring St. Nicholas, the miracle-worker, and requested all to remain perfectly still during her absence. The crowd respectfully made way for her, and she passed out into the darkness. With breathless expectation all awaited the arrival of St. Nicholas, who is the favourite saint of the Russian peasantry; but hours passed, and he did not appear. At last, towards sunrise, some of the less zealous spectators began to return home, and those of them who had come from the neighbouring village discovered to their horror that during their absence their horses had been stolen! At once they raised the hue-and-cry; and the peasants scoured the country in all directions in search of the *soi-disant* St. Barbara and her accomplices, but they never recovered the stolen property. "And serve them right, the blockheads!" added my informant, who had herself escaped falling into the trap by being absent from the village at the time.

It is but fair to add that the Russian peasantry, though in some respects extremely credulous, and, like all other people, subject to occasional panics, are by no means easily frightened by real dangers. Those who have seen them under fire will readily credit this statement. For my own part, I have had opportunities of observing them merely in danger of a non-military kind, and have often admired the perfect coolness displayed. Even an epidemic alarms them only when it attains a certain degree of intensity. Once I had a good opportunity of

observing this on board a large steamer on the Volga. It was a very hot day in the early autumn of 1872. As it was well known that there was a great deal of Asiatic cholera all over the country, prudent people refrained from eating much raw fruit; but Russian peasants are not generally prudent men, and I noticed that those on board were consuming enormous quantities of raw cucumbers and water-melons. This imprudence was soon followed by its natural punishment. I refrain from describing the scene that ensued, but I may say that those who were attacked received from the others every possible assistance. Had no unforeseen accident happened, we should have arrived at Kazan on the following morning, and been able to send the patients to the hospital of that town; but as there was little water in the river, we had to cast anchor for the night, and next morning we ran aground and stuck fast. Here we had to remain patiently till a smaller steamer hove in sight. All this time there was not the slightest symptom of panic, and when the small steamer came alongside there was no frantic rush to get away from the infected vessel, though it was quite evident that only a small number of the passengers could be taken off. Those who were nearest the gangway went quietly on board the small steamer, and those who were less fortunate remained patiently till another steamer happened to pass.

The old conceptions of disease, as something that may be most successfully cured by charms and similar means, are rapidly disappearing. The Zemstvo—that is to say, the new local self-government—has done much

towards this end by enabling the people to procure better medical attendance. In all, or nearly all, the towns there are public hospitals, which are—or at least seem to an unprofessional eye—in a very satisfactory condition. In many of these the resident doctor is daily besieged by a crowd of peasants, who come from far and near to ask advice and receive medicines. Besides this, in some provinces, Feldshers are placed in the principal villages, and the doctor makes frequent tours of inspection. The doctors are generally well-educated men, and do a large amount of work for a not very large remuneration.

Of the lunatic asylums, which are generally attached to the larger hospitals, I cannot speak very favourably. Some of them, indeed, such as the great central asylum near Kazan, are all that could be desired, but others are badly constructed and fearfully over-crowded. One or two of those I visited appeared to me to be conducted on very patriarchal principles, as the following incident may illustrate.

I had been visiting a large hospital, and had remained there so long that it was already dark before I reached the adjacent lunatic asylum. Seeing no lights in the windows I proposed to my companion, who was one of the inspectors, that we should delay our visit till the following morning, but he assured me that by the regulations the lights ought not to be extinguished till considerably later, and consequently there was no objection to our going in at once. If there was no legal objection, there was at least a physical obstruction

in the form of a large wooden door, and all our efforts to attract the attention of the porter or some other inmate were unavailing. At last, after much ringing, knocking, and shouting, a voice from within asked us who we were and what we wanted. A brief reply from my companion, not couched in the most polite or amiable terms, made the bolts rattle and the door open with surprising velocity, and we saw before us an old man with long dishevelled hair, who, as far as appearance went, might have been one of the lunatics, bowing obsequiously and muttering apologies. After groping our way along a dark corridor we entered a still darker room, and the door was closed and locked behind us. As the key turned in the rusty lock a wild scream rang through the darkness! Then came a yell, then a howl, and then various sounds which the poverty of the English language prevents me from designating—the whole blending into a hideous discord that would have been at home in some of the worst regions of Dante's Inferno. As to the cause of it I could not even form a conjecture. Gradually my eyes became accustomed to the darkness, and I could perceive dimly white figures flitting about the room. Then I felt something standing near me, and close to my shoulder I saw a pair of eyes and long streaming hair. On my other side, equally close, was something very like a woman's night-cap. Though by no means of a nervous temperament, I felt uncomfortable. To be shut up in a dark room with an indefinite number of excited maniacs is not a comfortable position. How long my imprisonment lasted I know

not—probably not more than two or three minutes, but it seemed a long time. At last a light was procured, and the whole affair was explained. The guardians, not expecting the visit of an inspector at so late an hour, had put out the lights and retired for the night much earlier than usual. The opening of the door had awakened one of the unfortunate inmates of the room where we were, and her hysterical scream had terrified the others.

By the influence of asylums, hospitals, and similar institutions, the old conceptions of disease, as I have said, are gradually dying out, but the Znakharka still finds practice. The fact that the Znakharka and the Feldsher are to be found side by side is very characteristic of Russian civilisation, which is a strange conglomeration of products belonging to very different periods. The student who undertakes the study of it will sometimes be scarcely less surprised than would be the naturalist who should unexpectedly stumble upon antediluvian Megatheria grazing tranquilly in the same field with prize Southdowns. He will find the most primitive institutions side by side with the latest products of French doctrinarianism, and the most childish superstitions in close proximity with the most advanced free-thinking. At one moment he will find himself in the far-distant past, and at the next he may unexpectedly come upon a road that looks very like a short cut into the unknown future.

CHAPTER VI.

A PEASANT FAMILY OF THE OLD TYPE.

Ivan Petroff—His Past Life—Co-operative Associations—Constitution of a Peasant Household—Predominance of Economic Conceptions over those of Blood-relationship—Peasant Marriages—Advantages of living in Large Families—Its Defects—Family Disruptions and their Consequences.

My illness had at least one good result. It brought me into contact with the Feldsher, and through him after my recovery I made the acquaintance of several peasants living in the village. Of these by far the most interesting was an old man called Ivan Petroff.

Ivan must have been about sixty years of age, but was still robust and strong, and had the reputation of being able to mow more hay in a given time than any other peasant in the village. His head would have made a fine study for a portrait-painter. Like Russian peasants in general, he wore his hair parted in the middle—a custom which perhaps owes its origin to the religious pictures. The reverend appearance given to his face by his long fair beard, slightly tinged with grey, was in part counteracted by his eyes, which had a strange twinkle in them—whether of humour or of roguery, it was difficult to say. Under all circumstances—whether in his light, nondescript summer costume, or in his warm sheep-skin, or in the long, glossy, dark-blue, double-breasted coat which he put on occasionally on Sundays and holidays—he always

looked a well-fed, respectable, well-to-do member of society; whilst his imperturbable composure, and the entire absence of obsequiousness or truculence in his manner, indicated plainly that he possessed no small amount of calm, deep-rooted self-respect. A stranger, on seeing him, might readily have leaped to the conclusion that he must be the Village Elder, but in reality he was a simple member of the Commune, like his neighbour, poor Zakhar Leshkof, who never let slip an opportunity of getting drunk, was always in debt and difficulties, and, on the whole, possessed a more than dubious reputation. Ivan had, it is true, been Village Elder some years before. When elected by the Village Assembly against his own wishes, he had said quietly, "Very well, children; I will serve my three years;" and at the end of that period, when the Assembly wished to re-elect him, he had answered firmly, "No, children; I have served my time. It is now the turn of some one who is younger, and has more time. There's Peter Alekseyef, a good fellow, and an honest: you may choose him." And the Assembly chose the peasant indicated; for Ivan, though a simple member of the Commune, had more influence in Communal affairs than any other half-dozen members put together. No grave matter was decided without his being consulted, and there was at least one instance on record of the Village Assembly postponing deliberations for a week because he happened to be absent in St. Petersburg.

No stranger casually meeting Ivan would ever for a moment have suspected that that big man, of calm,

commanding aspect, had been during the greater part of his life a serf. And yet a serf he had been, from his birth till he was about forty years of age—not merely a serf of the State, but the serf of a proprietor who had lived habitually on his property. For forty years of his life he had been dependent on the arbitrary will of a master, who had the legal power to flog him as often and as severely as he considered desirable. In reality, however, he had never been subjected to corporal punishment, for the proprietor to whom he had belonged had been, though in some respects severe, a just and intelligent master.

Ivan's bright and intelligent face had early attracted the master's attention, and it was accordingly decided that he should learn a trade. For this purpose he was sent to Moscow, and apprenticed there to a carpenter. After four years of apprenticeship he was able not only to earn his own bread, but to help the household in the payment of their taxes, and to pay annually to his master a fixed yearly sum—first ten, then twenty, then thirty, and ultimately, for some years immediately before the Emancipation in 1861, seventy roubles—that is to say, seventy of the old paper roubles, or about twenty "roubles silver," as the new paper roubles are commonly termed. In return for this annual sum he was free to work and wander about as he pleased, and for some years he had made ample use of his conditional liberty. I never succeeded in extracting from him a chronological account of his travels, but I could gather from his occasional remarks that he had wandered over a great part

of European Russia. Evidently he had been in his youth what is colloquially termed "a roving blade," and had by no means confined himself to the trade which he had learned during his four years of apprenticeship. At one time he had helped to navigate a raft from Vetluga to Astrakhan, a distance of about two thousand miles. At another time he had been at Archangel and Onega, on the shores of the White Sea. St. Petersburg and Moscow were both well known to him, and once at least he had visited Odessa. The precise nature of his occupations during these wanderings I could not ascertain; for, with all his openness of manner, he was extremely reticent regarding his commercial affairs. To all my inquiries on this topic he replied vaguely, "Lesnoe dyelo"—that is to say, "A wood affair;" and from this I concluded that his chief occupation had been that of a timber merchant. Indeed, when I knew him, though he was no longer a regular trader, it was well known that he was always ready to buy any bit of forest that could be bought in the vicinity for a reasonable price. His reticence regarding his commercial transactions was probably learned from the regular traders, who are always very reluctant to communicate anything regarding their mercantile affairs.

During all this nomadic period of his life Ivan had never entirely severed his connection with his home or with agricultural life. When about the age of twenty he had spent several months at home, taking part in the field labour, and had married a wife—a strong, healthy young woman, who had been selected for him by

his mother, and strongly recommended in consideration of her good character and her physical strength. In the opinion of Ivan's mother, beauty was a kind of luxury which only nobles and rich merchants could afford, and ordinary comeliness was a very secondary consideration—so secondary as to be left almost entirely out of sight. This was likewise the opinion of Ivan's wife. She had never been comely herself, she used to say, but she had been a good wife to her husband. He had never complained about her want of good looks, and had never gone after those who were considered good-looking. In expressing this opinion she always first bent forward, then drew herself up to her full length, and finally gave a little jerky nod sideways, so as to clench the statement. Then Ivan's bright eye would twinkle more brightly than usual, and he would ask her how she knew that—reminding her that he was not always at home. This was Ivan's stereotyped mode of teasing his wife, and every time he employed it he was called an "old scarecrow," or something of the kind.

Perhaps, however, Ivan's jocular remark had more significance in it than his wife cared to admit, for during the first years of their married life they had seen very little of each other. A few days after the marriage, when according to our notions the honeymoon should be at its height, Ivan had gone to Moscow for several months, leaving his young bride to the care of his father and mother. The young bride did not consider this an extraordinary hardship, for many of her companions

had been treated in the same way, and according to public opinion in that part of the country there was nothing abnormal in the proceeding. Indeed, it may be said in general that there is very little romance or sentimentality about Russian peasant marriages. The wife is taken as a helpmate, or in plain language a worker, rather than as a companion, and the mother-in-law leaves her very little time to indulge in useless regrets and fruitless dreaming.

As time wore on, and his father became older and frailer, Ivan's visits to his native place became longer and more frequent, and when the old man was at last incapable of work, Ivan settled down permanently and undertook the direction of the household. In the meantime his own children had been growing up. When I knew the family it comprised—besides two daughters who had married early and gone to live with their parents-in-law—Ivan and his wife, two sons, three daughters-in-law, and an indefinite and frequently varying number of grandchildren. The fact that there were three daughters-in-law and only two sons was the result of the Conscription, which had taken away the youngest son shortly after his marriage. The two who remained spent only a small part of the year at home. The one was a carpenter and the other a bricklayer, and both wandered about the country in search of employment as their father had done in his younger days. There was, however, one difference. The father had always shown a leaning towards commercial transactions, rather than the simple practice of his handicraft, and consequently

he had usually lived and travelled alone. The sons, on the contrary, confined themselves to their handicrafts, and were always during the working season members of *artéls*.

The artél in its various forms is a curious institution. Those to which Ivan's sons belonged were simply temporary, itinerant associations of workmen, who during the summer lived together, fed together, worked together, and on the termination of each bit of work divided amongst themselves the profits. This is the primitive form of the institution, and is now not very often met with. Here, as elsewhere, capital has made itself felt, and destroyed that equality which exists among the members of an artél in the above sense of the word. Instead of forming themselves into a temporary association, the workmen now generally make an engagement with a contractor who has a little capital, and receive from him fixed monthly wages. According to this arrangement the risk is less and the wages are smaller, and if any exceptional profit accrues from the undertaking it goes into the pocket of the contractor, in compensation for the exceptional losses which he may have to bear. The only association which exists in this case is for the purchase and preparation of provisions, and even these duties are very often left to the contractor.

In some of the larger towns there are artéls of a much more complex kind—permanent associations, possessing a large capital, and pecuniarily responsible for the acts of the individual members. Of these, by far the most celebrated is that of the Bank Porters. These

men have unlimited opportunities of stealing, and are often entrusted with the guarding or transporting of enormous sums; but the banker has no cause for anxiety, because he knows that if any defalcations occur they will be made good to him by the artél. Such accidents, however, rarely if ever happen, and the fact is by no means so extraordinary as many people suppose. The artél, being responsible for the individuals of which it is composed, is very careful in admitting new members, and a man when admitted is closely watched, not only by the regularly constituted office-bearers, but also by all his fellow-members who have an opportunity of observing him. If he begins to spend money too freely or to neglect his duties, though his employer may know nothing of the fact, suspicions are at once aroused among his fellow-members, and an investigation ensues—ending in summary expulsion if the suspicions prove to have been well-founded. Mutual responsibility, in short, creates naturally a very effective system of mutual supervision. Might not some of our employers of labour, who complain loudly of the carelessness and dishonesty of their servants, make some practical use of this principle?

Of Ivan's two sons, the one who was a carpenter by trade visited his family only occasionally, and at irregular intervals; the other, on the contrary, as building is impossible in Russia during the cold weather, spent the greater part of the winter at home. Both of them paid a large part of their earnings into the family treasury, over which their father exercised uncontrolled

authority. If he wished to make any considerable outlay, he always consulted his sons on the subject, but as he was a prudent, intelligent man, and enjoyed the respect and confidence of the family, he never met with any decided opposition. All the field work was performed by him with the assistance of his daughters-in-law; only at harvest time he hired one or two labourers to help him.

Ivan's household was a good specimen of the Russian peasant family of the old type. Previous to the Emancipation in 1861 there were many households of this kind, containing the representatives of three generations. All the members, young and old, lived together in patriarchal fashion under the direction and authority of the Head of the House, called usually *Khozaïn*, that is to say, the Administrator; or, in some districts, *Bolshák*, which means literally "the Big One." Generally speaking, this important position was occupied by the grandfather, or, if he was dead, by the eldest brother, but this rule was not very strictly observed. If, for instance, the grandfather became infirm, or if the eldest brother was incapacitated by disorderly habits or other cause, the place of authority was taken by some other member—it might be by a woman—who was a good manager, and possessed the greatest moral influence. The relations between the Head of the Household and the other members depended on custom and personal character, and they consequently varied greatly in different families. If the Big One was an intelligent man, of decided, energetic character, like my friend Ivan, there was probably perfect discipline in the house, except perhaps in the matter of female

tongues, which do not readily submit to the authority even of their owners; but very often it happened that the Big One was not thoroughly well fitted for his post, and in that case endless quarrels and bickerings inevitably took place. Those quarrels were generally caused and fomented by the female members of the household—a fact which will not seem strange if we try to realise how difficult it must be for several sisters-in-law to live together, with their children and a mother-in-law, within the narrow limits of a peasant's house. The complaints of the young bride, who finds that her mother-in-law puts all the hard work on her shoulders, form a favourite motive in the popular poetry.

The house, with its appurtenances, the cattle, the agricultural implements, the grain and other products, the money gained from the sale of these products—in a word, the house and nearly everything it contained—was the joint-property of the family. Hence, nothing was bought or sold by any member—not even by the Big One himself, unless he possessed an unusual amount of authority—without the express or tacit consent of the other grown-up males, and all the money that was earned was put into the common purse. When one of the sons left home to work elsewhere, he was expected to bring or send home all his earnings, except what he required for food, lodgings, and other *necessary* expenses; and if he understood the word "necessary" in too lax a sense, he had to listen to very plain-spoken reproaches when he returned. During his absence, which might last for a whole year or several years, his wife and children

remained in the house as before, and the money which he earned was probably devoted to the payment of the family taxes.

The peasant household of the old type is thus a primitive labour association, of which the members have all things in common, and it is not a little remarkable that the peasant conceives it as such rather than as a family. This is shown by the customary terminology and by the law of inheritance. The Head of the Household is not called by any word corresponding to Paterfamilias, but is termed, as I have said, Khozaïn, or Administrator—a word that is applied equally to a farmer, a shopkeeper, or the head of an industrial undertaking, and does not at all convey the idea of blood-relationship.

The law of inheritance is likewise based on this conception. When a household is broken up, the degree of blood-relationship is not taken into consideration in the distribution of the property. All the adult male members share equally. Illegitimate and adopted sons, if they have contributed their share of labour, have the same rights as the sons born in lawful wedlock. The married daughter, on the contrary—being regarded as belonging to her husband's family—and the son who has previously separated himself from the household, are excluded from the succession. Strictly speaking, there is no succession or inheritance whatever, except as regards the wearing apparel and any little personal effects of a similar kind. The house and all that it contains belong, not to the Khozaïn, but to the little household com-

munity; and, consequently, when the Khozaïn dies and the community is broken up, the members do not inherit, but merely appropriate individually what they had hitherto possessed collectively. Thus there is properly no inheritance or succession, but simply liquidation and distribution of the property among the members. The written law of inheritance, founded on the conception of personal property, is quite unknown to the peasantry, and quite inapplicable to their mode of life. In this way a large and most important section of the Code remains a dead letter for about four-fifths of the population!

This predominance of practical economic considerations is likewise exemplified by the way in which marriages are arranged in these large families.

In all respects the Russian peasantry are, as a class, extremely practical and matter-of-fact in their conceptions and habits, and are not at all prone to indulge in sublime, ethereal sentiments of any kind. They have little or nothing of what may be roughly termed the Hermann-and-Dorothea element in their composition, and consequently they know very little about those sentimental, romantic ideas which we habitually associate with the preliminary steps to matrimony. This fact is so patent to all who have studied the Russian peasantry, that even those who have endeavoured to idealise peasant life have rarely ventured to make their story turn on a sentimental love affair. These general remarks I insert here parenthetically, in order that the reader may more clearly understand what I have to say regarding peasant marriages.

In the primitive system of agriculture usually practised in Russia, the natural labour-unit—if it be allowed to use such a term—comprises a man, a woman, and a horse. As soon, therefore, as a boy becomes an able-bodied labourer he ought to be provided with the two accessories necessary for the completion of the labour-unit. To procure a horse, either by purchase or by rearing a foal, is the duty of the Head of the House; to procure a wife for the youth is the duty of "the female Big One" (bolshúkha). And the chief consideration in determining the choice is in both cases the same. Prudent domestic administrators are not to be tempted by showy horses or beautiful brides; what they seek is not beauty, but physical strength and capacity for work. When the youth reaches the age of eighteen he is informed that he ought to marry at once, and as soon as he gives his consent negotiations are opened with the parents of some eligible young person. In the larger villages the negotiations are sometimes facilitated by certain old women called *svakhi*, who occupy themselves specially with this kind of mediation; but very often the affair is arranged directly by, or through the agency of, some common friend of the two houses. Care must of course be taken that there is no legal obstacle to the marriage, and these obstacles are not always easily avoided in a small village, the inhabitants of which have been long in the habit of intermarrying. According to Russian ecclesiastical law, not only is marriage between first-cousins illegal, but affinity is considered as equivalent to consanguinity—that is to say, a mother-

in-law and a sister-in-law are regarded as a mother and a sister—and even the fictitious relationship created by standing together at the baptismal font as godfather and godmother is legally recognised. If all the preliminary negotiations are successful, the marriage takes place, and the bridegroom brings his bride home to the house of which he is a member. She brings nothing with her as a dowry except her trousseau, but she brings a pair of good strong arms, and thereby enriches her adopted family. Of course it happens occasionally—for human nature is everywhere essentially the same—that a young peasant falls in love with one of his former playmates, and brings his little romance to a happy conclusion at the altar; but such cases are very rare, and as a rule it may be said that the marriages of the Russian peasantry are arranged under the influence of economic rather than sentimental considerations.

The custom of living in large families has many decided economic advantages. We all know the edifying fable of the dying man who showed to his sons by means of a piece of wicker-work the advantages of living together and mutually assisting each other. In ordinary times the necessary expenses of a large household of ten members are considerably less than the combined expenses of two households comprising five members each, and when a "black day" comes, a large family can bear temporary adversity much more successfully than a small one. These are principles of world-wide application, and in the life of the Russian peasantry they have a peculiar force. Each adult peasant possesses, as I

shall hereafter explain, a share of the Communal land, but this share is not sufficient to occupy all his time and working power. One married pair can easily cultivate two shares—at least in all provinces where land is not very abundant. Now if a family is composed of two married couples, one of the men can go elsewhere and earn money, whilst the other, with his wife and sister-in-law, can cultivate the two combined shares of land. If, on the contrary, a family consists merely of one pair with their children, the man must either remain at home, in which case he may have difficulty in finding work for the whole of his time, or he must leave home, and entrust the cultivation of his share of the land to his wife, whose time must be in great part devoted to domestic affairs.

In the time of serfage the proprietors clearly perceived these and similar advantages, and compelled their serfs to live together in large families. No family could be broken up without the proprietor's consent, and this consent was not easily obtained unless the family had assumed quite abnormal proportions, and was permanently disturbed by domestic dissension. In the matrimonial affairs of the serfs, too, the majority of the proprietors systematically exercised a certain supervision, not necessarily from any paltry, meddling spirit, but because their material interests were thereby affected. A proprietor would not, for instance, allow the daughter of one of his serfs to marry a serf belonging to another proprietor—because he would thereby lose a female labourer—unless some compensation were offered. The

compensation might be a sum of money, or the affair might be arranged on the principle of reciprocity, by the master of the bridegroom allowing one of his female serfs to marry a serf belonging to the master of the bride.

However advantageous the custom of living in large families may appear when regarded from the economic point of view, it has very serious defects, both theoretical and practical.

That families connected by the ties of blood-relationship and marriage can easily live together in harmony is one of those social axioms which are accepted universally and believed by nobody. We all know by our own experience, or by that of others, that the friendly relations of two such families are greatly endangered by proximity of habitation. To live in the same street is not advisable; to occupy adjoining houses is positively dangerous; and to live under the same roof is certainly fatal to prolonged amity. There may be the very best intentions on both sides, and the arrangement may be inaugurated by the most gushing expressions of undying affection and by the discovery of innumerable secret affinities, but neither affinities, affection, nor good intentions can withstand the constant friction and occasional jerks which inevitably ensue. Now the reader must endeavour to realise that Russian peasants, even when clad in sheep-skins, are human beings like ourselves. Though they are often represented as abstract entities—as figures in a table of statistics or dots on a diagram—they have in reality "organs, dimensions, senses, affec-

tions, passions." If not exactly "fed with the same food," they are at least "hurt with the same weapons, subject to the same diseases, healed by the same means," and liable to be irritated by the same annoyances as we are. And those of them who live in large families are subjected to a kind of probation that most of us have never dreamed of. The families comprising a large household not only live together, but have nearly all things in common. Each member works, not for himself, but for the household, and all that he earns is expected to go into the family treasury. The arrangement almost inevitably leads to one of two results—either there are continual dissensions, or order is preserved by a powerful domestic tyranny infinitely worse than serfage.

It was quite natural, therefore, that when the authority of the landed proprietors was abolished in 1861, the large peasant families almost all fell to pieces. The arbitrary rule of the Khozaïn was based on, and maintained by, the arbitrary rule of the proprietor, and both naturally fell together. Households like that of our friend Ivan have been preserved only in exceptional cases, where the Head of the House happened to possess an unusual amount of moral influence over the other members.

This change has unquestionably had a prejudicial influence on the material welfare of the peasantry, but it must have added considerably to their domestic comfort, and can scarcely fail to produce good moral results. For the present, however, the evil consequences are by far the most prominent. Every married peasant

strives to have a house of his own, and many of them, in order to defray the necessary expenses, have been obliged to contract debts. This is a very serious matter. Even if the peasants could obtain money at five or six per cent., the position of the debtors would be bad enough, but it is in reality much worse, for the village usurers consider twenty or twenty-five per cent. a by no means exorbitant rate of interest. Thus the peasant who contracts debts has a hard struggle to pay the interest in ordinary times, and when some misfortune overtakes him—when, for instance, the harvest is bad or his horse is stolen—he probably falls hopelessly into pecuniary embarrassments. I have seen peasants not specially addicted to drunkenness or other ruinous habits sink to a helpless state of insolvency. Fortunately for such insolvent debtors, they are treated by the law with extreme leniency. Their house, their share of the common land, their agricultural implements, their horse—in a word, all that is necessary for their subsistence, is exempt from sequestration. The Commune may, however, subject them to corporal punishment if they do not pay their taxes, and in many other respects the position of a peasant who is protected against utter destitution merely by the law is very far from being enviable.

CHAPTER VII.

THE PEASANTRY OF THE NORTH.

Communal Land—System of Agriculture—Parish Fêtes—Fasting—Winter Occupations—Yearly Migrations—Domestic Industries—Influence of Capital and Wholesale Enterprise—The State Peasants—Domestic Serfs and Serfs properly so-called—Serf-dues—Buckle's "History of Civilisation"—"People who play Pranks"—The Far North.

IVÁNOFKA may be taken as a fair specimen of the villages in the northern half of the country, and a brief description of its inhabitants will convey a tolerably correct notion of the northern peasantry in general.

Nearly the whole of the female population, and about one-half of the male inhabitants, are habitually engaged in cultivating the Communal land, which comprises about two thousand acres of a light sandy soil. The arable part of this land is divided into three large fields, each of which is cut up into long narrow strips. The first field is reserved for the winter grain—that is to say, rye, which forms, in the shape of black bread, the principal food of the peasantry. In the second are raised oats for the horses, and buckwheat, which is largely used for food. The third lies fallow, and is used in the summer as pasturage for the cattle.

All the villagers in this part of the country divide the arable land in this way, in order to suit the triennial rotation of crops. This triennial system is extremely simple. The field which is used this year for raising

winter grain will be used next year for raising summer grain, and in the following year will lie fallow. Before being sown with winter grain it ought to receive a certain amount of manure. Every family possesses in each of the two fields under cultivation one or more of the long narrow strips or belts into which they are divided.

The annual life of the peasantry is that of simple husbandmen, inhabiting a country where the winter is long and severe. The agricultural year begins in April with the melting of the snow. Nature has been lying dormant for some months. Awaking now from her long sleep, and throwing off her white mantle, she strives to make up for lost time. No sooner has the snow disappeared than the fresh young grass begins to shoot up, and very soon afterwards the shrubs and trees begin to bud. The rapidity of this transition from winter to spring astonishes the inhabitants of more temperate climes.

On St. George's Day (April 23rd*) the cattle are brought out for the first time, and sprinkled with holy water by the priest. The cattle of the Russian peasantry are never very fat, but at this period of the year their appearance is truly lamentable. During the winter they have been cooped up in small unventilated cow-houses, and fed almost exclusively on straw; now, when they are released from their imprisonment, they

* With regard to saints' days, I always give the date according to the old style. To find the date according to our calendar, twelve days must be added.

look like the ghosts of their former emaciated selves. All are lean and weak, many are lame, and some cannot rise to their feet without assistance.

Meanwhile the peasants are impatient to begin the field labour. An old proverb which they all know says: "Sow in mud and you will be a prince;" and they always act in accordance with this dictate of traditional wisdom. As soon as it is possible to plough they begin to prepare the land for the summer grain, and this labour occupies them probably till the end of May. Then comes the work of carting out manure and preparing the fallow field for the winter grain, which will last probably till about St. Peter's Day (June 29th), when the hay-making generally begins. After the hay-making comes the harvest, by far the busiest time of the year. From the middle of July—especially from St. Elijah's Day (July 20th), when the saint is usually heard rumbling along the heavens in his chariot of fire*—until the end of August, the peasant may work day and night, and yet he will find that he has barely time to get all his work done. In little more than a month he has to reap and stack his grain—rye, oats, and whatever else he may have sown either in spring or in the preceding autumn—and to sow the winter grain for next year. To add to his troubles, it sometimes happens that the rye and the oats ripen almost simultaneously, and his position is then still more difficult than usual.

* It is thus that the peasants explain the thunder, which is often heard at that season.

Whether the seasons favour him or not, the peasant has at this time a hard task, for he can rarely afford to hire the requisite number of labourers, and has generally the assistance merely of his wife and family; but he can at this season work for a short time at high pressure, for he has the prospect of soon obtaining a good rest and an abundance of food. About the end of September the field labour is finished, and on the first day of October the harvest festival begins—a joyous season, during which the parish fêtes are commonly celebrated.

To celebrate a parish fête in true orthodox fashion it is necessary to prepare beforehand a large quantity of *braga*—a kind of home-brewed small beer—and to bake a plentiful supply of *piroghí* or pies. Oil, too, has to be procured, and vodka (rye spirit) in goodly quantity. At the same time the big room of the *izbá*, as the peasant's house is called, has to be cleared, the floor washed, and the table and benches scrubbed. The evening before the fête, while the piroghí are being baked, a little lamp burns before the Icon in the corner of the room, and perhaps one or two guests from a distance arrive in order that they may have on the morrow a full day's enjoyment.

On the morning of the fête the proceedings begin by a long service in the church, at which all the inhabitants are present in their best holiday costumes, except those matrons and young women who remain at home to prepare the dinner. About mid-day dinner is served in each izbá for the family and their friends.

In general the Russian peasant's fare is of the simplest kind, and rarely comprises animal food of any sort—not from any vegetarian proclivities, but merely because beef, mutton, and pork are too expensive; but on a holiday, such as a parish fête, there is always on the dinner-table a considerable variety of dishes. In the house of a well-to-do peasant there will be not only greasy cabbage-soup and *kasha*—a dish made from buckwheat—but also pork, mutton, and perhaps even beef. Braga will be supplied in unlimited quantities, and more than once vodka will be handed round. When the repast is finished, all rise together, and, turning towards the Icon in the corner, bow and cross themselves repeatedly. The guests then say to their host, "*Spasibo za khleb za sol*"—that is to say, "Thanks for your hospitality," or more literally, "Thanks for bread and salt;" and the host replies, "Do not be displeased, sit down once more for good luck"—or perhaps he puts the last part of his request into the form of a rhyming couplet to the following effect: "Sit down, that the hens may brood, and that the chickens and bees may multiply!" All obey this request, and there is another round of vodka.

After dinner some stroll about, chatting with their friends, or go to sleep in some shady nook, whilst those who wish to make merry go to the spot where the young people are singing, playing, and amusing themselves in various ways. As the sun sinks towards the horizon, the more grave, staid guests wend their way home-

wards, but many remain for supper; and as evening advances the effects of the vodka become more and more apparent. Sounds of revelry are heard more frequently from the houses, and a large proportion of the inhabitants and guests appear on the road in various degrees of intoxication. Some of these vow eternal affection to their friends, or with flaccid gestures and in incoherent tones harangue invisible audiences; others stagger about aimlessly in besotted self-contentment, till they drop down in a state of complete unconsciousness. There they will lie tranquilly till they are picked up by their less intoxicated friends, or more probably till they awake of their own accord on the next morning.

As a whole, a village fête in Russia is one of the most saddening spectacles I have ever witnessed. It affords a new proof—where, alas! no new proof was required—that we northern nations, who know so well how to work, are utterly incapable of amusing ourselves. In France or Italy a popular holiday is a pleasing sight, and may easily make us regret that life has so few holidays. Not only in the morning, but also in the evening, after a long day, there is a bright, joyous expression on every face, and a hum of genuine merriment rises continually from the crowd. In northern countries, on the contrary, the people do not know how to enjoy themselves in a harmless, rational way, and seek a refuge in intoxication, so that the sight of a popular holiday may make us regret that life has any holidays at all.

If the Russian peasant's food were always as good and plentiful as at this season of the year, he would have little reason to complain; but this is by no means the case. Gradually, as the harvest-time recedes, it deteriorates in quality, and sometimes diminishes in quantity. Besides this, during a great part of the year the peasant is prevented from using much that he possesses by the rules of the Church.

In southern climes, where these rules were elaborated and first practised, the prescribed fasts are perhaps useful not only in a religious, but also in a sanitary sense. Having abundance of fruit and vegetables, the inhabitants do well, perhaps, in abstaining occasionally from animal food. But in countries like Northern and Central Russia, the influence of these rules is very different. The Russian peasant cannot obtain as much animal food as he requires, whilst sour cabbage and cucumbers are probably the only vegetables he can procure, and fruit of any kind is for him an unattainable luxury. Under these circumstances, abstinence from eggs and milk in all their forms during several months of the year seems to the secular mind a superfluous bit of asceticism. If the Church would direct her maternal solicitude to the peasant's drinking, and leave him to eat what he pleases, she might exercise a beneficial influence on his material and moral welfare. Unfortunately she has a great deal too much inherent immobility to do anything of the kind, and there is no reasonable probability of her ever arriving at the simple truth, for which there is very high authority, that rules and ordinances were made for

man, and not man for the rules and ordinances. Meanwhile the Russian peasant must fast during the seven weeks of Lent, during two or three weeks in June, from the beginning of November till Christmas, and on all Wednesdays and Fridays during the remainder of the year.

From the festival time till the following spring there is no possibility of doing any agricultural work, for the ground is hard as iron, and covered with a deep layer of snow. The male peasants, therefore, who remain in the villages, have very little to do, and may spend the greater part of their time in lying idly on the stove, unless they happen to have learned some handicraft that can be practised at home. Formerly, many of them were employed in transporting the grain to the market town, which might be several hundred miles distant; but now this species of occupation has been greatly diminished by the extension of railways.

Another winter occupation which was formerly practised, and has now almost fallen into disuse, was that of stealing wood in the forest. This was, according to peasant morality, no sin, or at most a very venial offence, for God planted and watered the trees, and therefore forests belong properly to no one. So thought the peasantry, but the landed proprietors and the Administration of the Demesnes held a different theory of property, and consequently precautions had to be taken to avoid detection. In order to ensure success it was necessary to choose a night when there was a violent snow-storm, which would immediately obliterate all traces of the expedition; and

when such a night was found, the operation was commonly performed with success. During the hours of darkness a tree would be felled, stripped of its branches, dragged into the village, and cut up into firewood, and at sunrise the actors would be tranquilly sleeping on the stove as if they had spent the night at home. In recent years the justices of the peace have done much towards putting down this practice and eradicating the loose conceptions of property with which it was connected.

For the female part of the population winter is a busy time, for it is during these four or five months that the spinning and weaving have to be done.

In many of the northern villages the tedium of the long winter evenings is relieved by so-called Besyedy, a word which signifies literally conversazioni. A Besyeda, however, is not exactly a conversazione as we understand the term, but resembles rather what is by some ladies called a Dorcas meeting, with this essential difference, that those present work for themselves and not for any benevolent purpose. In some villages as many as three Besyedy regularly assemble about sunset: one for the children, the second for the young people, and the third for the matrons. Each of the three has its peculiar character. In the first, the children work and amuse themselves under the superintendence of an old woman, who trims the torch and endeavours to keep order. The little girls spin flax in a primitive way without the aid of a "jenny," and the boys, who are, on the whole, much less industrious, make *lapti*—rude shoes of plaited bark—or simple bits of wicker-work.

These occupations do not prevent an almost incessant hum of talk, frequent discordant attempts to sing in chorus, and occasional quarrels requiring the energetic interference of the old woman who sits by the torch. To amuse her noisy flock she sometimes relates to them, for the hundredth time, one of those wonderful old stories that lose nothing by repetition, and all listen to her attentively, as if they had never heard the story before. The second Besyeda is held in another house by the young people of a riper age. Here the workers are naturally more staid, less given to quarrelling, sing more in harmony, and require no one to look after them. Some people, however, might think that a chaperon or inspector of some kind would be by no means out of place, for a good deal of flirtation goes on, and, if village scandal is to be trusted, strict propriety in thought, word, and deed is not always observed. How far these reports are true I cannot pretend to say, for the presence of a stranger always acts on the company like the presence of a severe inspector. In the third Besyeda there is always at least strict decorum. Here the married women work together and talk about their domestic concerns, enlivening the conversation occasionally by the introduction of little bits of village scandal.

Such is the ordinary life of the peasants who live by agriculture; but many of the villagers live occasionally or permanently in the towns. Probably the majority of the peasants in this part of Russia have at some period of their lives gained a living in some other part of the

country. Many of the absentees spend regularly a part of the year at home, whilst others visit their families only occasionally, and, it may be, at long intervals. In no case, however, do they sever their connection with their native village. The artisan who goes to work in a distant town never takes his wife and family with him, and even the man who becomes a rich merchant in Moscow or St. Petersburg remains probably a member of the Village Commune, and pays his share of the taxes, though he does not enjoy any of the corresponding privileges. Once I remember asking a rich man of this kind, the proprietor of several large valuable houses in St. Petersburg, why he did not free himself from all connection with his native Commune, with which he had no longer any common interests. His answer was, "It is all very well to be free, and I don't want anything from the Commune now; but my old father lives there, my mother is buried there, and I like to go back to the old place sometimes. Besides, I have children, and our affairs are commercial (*nashe dyelo torgovoe*). Who knows but my children may be very glad some day to have a share of the Communal land?"

In respect to these non-agricultural occupations, each district has its specialty. The province of Yaroslaff, for instance, supplies the large towns with waiters for the Traktirs, or lower class of restaurants, whilst the best hotels in Petersburg are supplied by the Tartars of Kasímof, celebrated for their sobriety and honesty. One part of the province of Kostromá has a special reputation for producing carpenters and stove-builders, whilst

another part, as I once discovered to my surprise, sends yearly to Siberia—not as convicts, but as free labourers —a large contingent of tailors and workers in felt! On questioning some youngsters who were accompanying as apprentices one of these bands, I was informed by a bright-eyed youth of about sixteen that he had already made the journey twice, and intended to go every winter. "And you always bring home a big pile of money with you?" I inquired. "Nitchevo!" replied the little fellow, gaily, with an air of pride and self-confidence; "last year I brought home three roubles!" This answer was, at the moment, not at all welcome, for I had just been discussing with a Russian fellow-traveller as to whether the peasantry can fairly be called industrious, and the boy's reply enabled my antagonist to make a point against me. "You hear that!" he said, triumphantly. "A Russian peasant goes all the way to Siberia and back for three roubles! Could you get an Englishman to work at that rate?" "Perhaps not," I replied, evasively, thinking at the same time that if a youth were sent several times from Land's End to John o' Groat's House, and obliged to make the greater part of the journey in carts or on foot, he would probably expect, by way of remuneration for the time and labour expended, rather more than seven and sixpence!

Very often the peasants find industrial occupations without leaving home, for various industries which do not require complicated machinery are practised in the villages by the peasants and their families. Textile fabrics, wooden vessels, wrought iron, pottery, leather,

rush-matting, and numerous other articles are thus produced in enormous quantities. Occasionally we find not only a whole village, but even a whole district occupied almost exclusively with some one kind of manual industry. In the province of Vladimir, for example, a large group of villages live by Icon-painting; in one locality near Nizhni, nineteen villages are occupied with the manufacture of axes; round about Pavlovo, in the same province, eighty villages produce almost nothing but cutlery; and in a locality called Ouloma, on the borders of Novgorod and Tver, no less than two hundred villages live by nail-making.

These domestic industries have long existed, and have hitherto been an abundant source of revenue—providing a certain compensation for the poverty of the soil. But at present they are in a very critical position. They belong to the primitive period of economic development, and that period in Russia is now rapidly drawing to a close. Formerly the Head of a Household bought the raw material, and sold with a reasonable profit the manufactured articles at the "Bazaars," as the local fairs are called, or perhaps at the great annual *Yarmarka* * of Nizhni-Novgorod. This primitive system is now rapidly becoming obsolete. Great factories on the West-European model are quickly multiplying, and it is difficult for manual labour, unassisted by machinery, to compete with them. Besides this, the periodical Bazaars and Yarmarki, at which producers and consumers transacted their affairs without mediation, are being gradually

* This term is a corruption of the German word Jahrmarkt.

replaced by permanent stores and various classes of middle-men, who facilitate the relations between consumers and producers. In a word, capital and wholesale enterprise have come into the field, and are revolutionising the old methods of production and trade. Many of those who formerly worked at home on their own account are now forced to enter the great factories and work for fixed weekly or monthly wages; and nearly all who still work at home now receive the raw material on credit, and deliver the manufactured articles to wholesale merchants at a stipulated price.

To the orthodox political economist this important change must afford great satisfaction. According to his theories it is a gigantic step in the right direction, and must necessarily redound to the advantage of all parties concerned. The producer now receives a regular supply of the raw material, and regularly disposes of the articles manufactured; and the time and trouble which he formerly devoted to wandering about in search of customers he can now employ more profitably in productive work. The creation of a class between the producers and the consumers is an important step towards that division and specialisation of labour, without which great industrial and commercial enterprises are impossible. The consumer no longer requires to go on a fixed day to some distant point, on the chance of finding there what he requires, but can always buy what he pleases in the permanent stores. Above all, the production is greatly increased in amount, and the price of manufactured goods is proportionally lessened.

All this seems clear enough in theory, and any one who values intellectual tranquillity will feel disposed to accept this view of the case without questioning its accuracy; but the unfortunate traveller, who is obliged to use his eyes as well as his logical faculties, will probably find some little difficulty in making the objective facts fit into the *à priori* formula. Far be it from me to question the wisdom of political economists, but I cannot refrain from remarking that of the three classes concerned—producers, middle-men, and consumers—two fail to perceive and appreciate the benefits which have been conferred upon them. The producers complain that on the new system they work more and gain less; and the consumers complain that the manufactured articles are far inferior in quality. The middle-men, who are popularly supposed to take for themselves the lion's share of the profits, alone seem satisfied with the new arrangement. However this may be, one thing is certain: the great factories have not hitherto contributed to the material or moral welfare of the population among which they have been established. Nowhere is there so much disease, drunkenness, demoralisation, and misery, as in the manufacturing districts.

The reader must not imagine that in making these statements I have any wish to calumniate the spirit of modern enterprise, or to advocate a return to primitive barbarism. All great changes produce a mixture of good and evil, and at first the evil is pretty sure to come prominently forward. Russia is at this moment in a state of transition, and the new condition of things is

not yet properly organised. In general there is no proper accommodation for the workmen in the neighbourhood of the factories, and in the smaller works no attention is paid to sanitary considerations. Thus, for instance, in the province of Novgorod there was in 1870 a lucifer-match manufactory, in which all the hands employed worked habitually in an atmosphere impregnated with the fumes of phosphorus; and the natural consequence of this was that a large number of the workers were suffering from disease of the jaw-bone and other complaints. Similar imperfections are seen in the commercial world. As very many branches of industry and commerce are still in their infancy, it often happens that some enterprising trader acquires practically a monopoly, and uses his influence in reckless fashion. Not a few industrial villages have thus fallen under the power of the *Kulaki*—literally Fists—as these monopolists are called. By advancing money the Kulák may succeed in acquiring over a group of villages a power almost as unlimited as that of the proprietor in the time of serfage.

Attempts are frequently made to break the power of the *Kulaki* by means of association. The favourite form of association is that recommended by Schulze-Delitsch, which has had so much success in Germany. What the ultimate result of this movement will be it would be hazardous to predict, but I may say that already some of these associations work remarkably well.

During all my travels in Russia, one of the objects which I constantly kept in view was the collection

of materials for a History of the Emancipation of the Serfs—a great reform, which has always seemed to me one of the most interesting events of modern history. It was natural, therefore, that I should gather in this northern region as much information as possible regarding the life of the peasantry and their relation to the landed proprietors during the time of serfage; and I think that a little of this information will be not unacceptable to the reader.

In this, as in other parts of Russia, a very large portion of the land—perhaps as much as one-half—belonged to the State. The peasants living on this land had no masters, and were governed by a special branch of the Imperial Administration. In a certain sense they were serfs, for they were not allowed to change their official domicile, but practically they enjoyed a very large amount of liberty. By paying a small sum for a passport they could leave their villages for an indefinite length of time, and so long as they paid regularly their taxes and dues they were in little danger of being molested. Many of them, though officially inscribed in their native villages, lived permanently in the towns, and not a few of them succeeded in amassing large fortunes.

Of the remaining land, a considerable portion belonged to rich nobles, who rarely or never visited their estates, and left the management of them either to the serfs themselves or to a steward, who acted according to a code of instructions. On these estates the position of the serfs was very similar to that of the State

peasants. They had their Communal land, which they distributed among themselves as they thought fit, and enjoyed the remainder of the arable land in return for a fixed yearly rent.

Some proprietors, however, lived on their estates and farmed on their own account, and here the condition of the serfs was somewhat different. A considerable number of these, perhaps as many as ten per cent., were, properly speaking, not serfs at all, but rather domestic slaves, who fulfilled the functions of coachmen, grooms, gardeners, gamekeepers, cooks, lackeys, and the like. Their wives and daughters acted as nurses, domestic servants, lady's maids, and seamstresses. If the master organised a private theatre or orchestra, the actors or musicians were drawn from this class. These serfs lived in the mansion or the immediate vicinity, possessed no land, except perhaps a little plot for a kitchen-garden, and were fed and clothed by the master. Their number was generally out of all proportion to the amount of work they had to perform, and consequently they were always imbued with an hereditary spirit of indolence, and performed lazily and carelessly what they had to do. On the other hand, they were often sincerely attached to the family they served, and occasionally proved by acts their fidelity and attachment. Here is an instance out of the many for which I can vouch. An old nurse, whose mistress was dangerously ill, vowed that, in the event of the patient's recovery, she would make a pilgrimage first to Kief, the Holy City on the Dnieper, and afterwards to Solovetsk, a much-revered monastery

on an island in the White Sea. The patient recovered, and the old woman walked in fulfilment of her vow more than two thousand miles!

I have called this class of serfs "domestic slaves," because I cannot find any more appropriate term, but I must warn the reader that he ought not to use this phrase in presence of a Russian. On this point Russians are extremely sensitive. Serfage, they say indignantly, was something quite different from slavery; and slavery never existed in Russia!

This assertion, which I have heard scores of times from educated Russians, cannot be accepted unreservedly. The first part of it is perfectly true; the second, perfectly false. In old times slavery was a recognised institution in Russia, as in other countries. It is almost impossible to read a few pages of the old native chronicles without stumbling on references to slaves; and I distinctly remember—though I cannot at this moment give chapter and verse—that there was one Russian Prince who was so valiant and so successful in his wars, that during his reign a slave might be bought for a few coppers. How the distinction between serfs and slaves gradually disappeared, and how the latter term fell into disuse, I need not here relate; but I must assert, in the interests of truth, that the class of serfs above mentioned, though they were officially and popularly called *dvorovuiye lyudi*—that is to say, court-yard people—were to all intents and purposes domestic slaves. Down to the commencement of the present century the Russian newspapers contained advertise-

ments of this kind—I take the examples almost at random from the *Moscow Gazette* of 1801 : "To BE SOLD, three coachmen, well-trained and handsome; and two girls, the one eighteen and the other fifteen years of age, both of them good-looking and well acquainted with various kinds of handiwork. In the same house there are for sale two hair-dressers: the one twenty-one years of age can read, write, play on a musical instrument, and act as huntsman; the other can dress ladies' and gentlemen's hair. In the same house are sold pianos and organs." A little further on, a first-rate clerk, a carver, and a lackey are offered for sale, and the reason assigned is superabundance of the articles in question (*za izlishestvom*). In some instances it seems as if the serfs and the cattle were intentionally put in the same category, as in the following: "In this house one can buy a coachman, and a Dutch cow about to calve." The style of these advertisements and the frequent recurrence of the same address show plainly that there was at that time a regular class of slave-dealers.

The humane Alexander I. prohibited public advertisements of this kind, but he did not put down the custom which they represented; and his successor, Nicholas, took no active measures for its repression. Thus until the commencement of the present reign—that is to say, until about twenty years ago—the practice was continued under a more or less disguised form. Middle-aged people have often told me that in their youth they knew proprietors who habitually caused young domestic serfs to be taught trades, in order

afterwards to sell them or let them out for hire. It was from such proprietors that the theatres obtained a large number of their best actors.

Very different was the position of the serfs properly so-called. They lived in villages, possessed houses and gardens of their own, tilled the Communal land for their own benefit, enjoyed a certain amount of self-government, of which I shall speak presently, and were rarely sold except as part of the estate. They might, indeed, be sold to a landed proprietor, and transferred to his estates; but such transactions rarely took place. The ordinary relations which existed between serfs and the proprietor may be best explained by one or two examples. Let us take first Ivánofka.

Though the proprietor's house was situated, as I have said, close to the village, the manor land and the Communal land had always been kept clearly separate, and might almost be said to form two independent estates. The proprietor who reigned in Ivánofka during the last years of serfage was keenly alive to his own interests, and always desirous of increasing his revenue; but he was, at the same time, a just and intelligent man, who was never guilty of extortion or cruelty. Though he had the welfare of his serfs really at heart, he rarely interfered in their domestic or Communal arrangements, because he believed that men in general, and Russian peasants in particular, are the best administrators of their own affairs. He did not, indeed, always carry out this principle to its logical consequences, for he was not by any means a thorough doctrinaire. Thus, for example, he insisted on

being consulted when a Village Elder was to be elected, or any important matter decided; and when circumstances seemed to demand his interference, he usually showed the peasants that he could be dictator if he chose. These were, however, exceptional incidents. In the ordinary course of affairs he treated the Commune almost as a respected farmer or trusted steward. In return for the land which he ceded to it, and which it was free to distribute among its members as it thought fit, he demanded a certain amount of labour and dues; but he never determined what particular labourers should be sent to him, or in what way the dues should be levied.

The amount of the labour-dues was determined in this way. The *tyagló*, or labour-unit, was composed of a man, a woman, and a horse; and each *tyagló* owed to the proprietor three days' labour every week. If a household contained two *tyágla*, one of them might work for the proprietor six days in the week, and thereby liberate the other from its obligation. In this way one-half of a large family could labour constantly for the household, whilst the other half fulfilled all the obligations towards the proprietor. The other dues consisted of lambs, chickens, eggs, and linen-cloth, together with a certain sum of money, which was contributed by those peasants who were allowed to go away and work in the towns.

At a short distance from Ivánofka was an estate, which had been managed in the time of serfage on entirely different principles. The proprietor was a man who had likewise the welfare of his serfs at heart, because he knew that on their welfare depended his own revenues,

but he did not believe in the principle of allowing them to manage their own affairs. The Russian peasant, he was wont to say, is a child—a foolish, imprudent, indolent child, who inevitably ruins himself when not properly looked after. In accordance with this principle the proprietor sought to regulate not merely the Communal but also the domestic concerns of his serfs. Not only did he always nominate the Village Elder and decide all matters touching the Communal welfare, but he at the same time arranged the marriages, decided who was to seek work in the towns and who was to stay at home, paid frequent visits of inspection to the peasants' houses, prohibited the heads of families from selling their grain without his permission, and exercised in various other ways a system of minute supervision. In return for all this paternal solicitude he was able to extract a wonderfully large revenue from his estate, though his fields were by no means more fertile or better cultivated than those of his neighbours. The additional revenue was derived, not from the land, but from the serfs. Knowing intimately the domestic affairs of each family, he could lay on them the heaviest possible burdens without adding that last hair which is said to break the camel's back. And many of the expedients he employed did more credit to his ingenuity than to his moral character. Thus, for instance, if he discovered that a family had saved a little money, he would propose that one of the daughters should marry some one of whom, he knew, her father would certainly disapprove, or he would express his intention of giving one of the sons as a recruit. In either case a

ransom was pretty sure to be paid in order to ward off the threatened danger.

All the proprietors who lived on their estates approached more or less nearly to one of these two types; but here in the northern regions the latter type was not very often met with. Partly from the prevailing absenteeism among the landlords, and partly from the peasants' old-established habit of wandering about the country and going to the towns in search of work, these peasants of the north are more energetic, more intelligent, more independent, and consequently less docile and pliable than those of the fertile central provinces. They have, too, more education. A large proportion of them can read and write, and occasionally one meets among them men who have a keen desire for knowledge. Several times I encountered peasants in this region who had a small collection of books, and twice I found in such collections, much to my astonishment, a Russian translation of Buckle's "History of Civilisation"!

How, it may be asked, did a work of this sort find its way to such place? If the reader will pardon a short digression, I shall explain the fact.

At the commencement of the present reign there was a curious intellectual movement—of which I shall have more to say hereafter—among the Russian educated classes. The movement assumed various forms, of which two of the most prominent were a desire for encyclopædic knowledge, and an attempt to reduce all knowledge to a scientific form. For men in this state of mind, Buckle's great work had naturally a

powerful fascination. It seemed at first sight to reduce the multifarious, conflicting facts of human history to a few simple principles, and to evolve order out of chaos. Its success, therefore, was great. In the course of a few years no less than four independent translations—so at least I have been informed by a good authority—were published and sold. Every one read, or at least professed to have read, the wonderful book, and many believed that its author was the great genius of the present generation. During the first year of my residence in Russia, I rarely had a serious conversation without hearing Buckle's name mentioned; and my friends almost always assumed that he had succeeded in creating a genuine science of history on the inductive method. In vain I pointed out that Buckle had merely thrown out some hints in his introductory chapter as to how such a science ought to be constructed, and that he had himself made no serious attempt to use the method which he commended. My objections had little or no effect: the belief was too deep-rooted to be so easily eradicated. In books, periodicals, newspapers, and professional lectures, the name of Buckle was constantly cited—often violently dragged in without the slightest reason—and the cheap translations of his work were sold in enormous quantities. It is not, then, so very wonderful after all that the book should have found its way to two villages in the province of Yaroslaff.

The enterprising, self-reliant, independent spirit which is often to be found among those peasants of the

north, appears occasionally in the young generation. Often in this part of the country I have encountered boys who recalled young America rather than young Russia. One of these young hopefuls I remembered well. I was waiting at a post-station for the horses to be changed, when he appeared before me in a sheep-skin, fur cap, and gigantic double-soled boots—all of which articles had been made on a scale adapted to future rather than actual requirements. He must have stood in his boots about three feet eight inches, and he could not have been more than twelve years of age; but he had already learned to look upon life as a serious business, wore a commanding air, and knitted his innocent little brows as if the cares of an empire weighed on his diminutive shoulders. Though he was to act as Yemstchik, he had to leave the putting in of the horses to larger specimens of the human species, but he observed carefully that all was done properly. Putting one of his big boots a little in advance, and drawing himself up to his full shortness, he watched the operation attentively, as if the smallness of his stature had nothing to do with his inactivity. When all was ready, he climbed up to his seat, and at a signal from the station-keeper, who watched with paternal pride all the movements of the little prodigy, we dashed off at a pace rarely attained by post-horses. He had the faculty of emitting a peculiar sound—something between a whirr and a whistle—that appeared to have a magical effect on the team, and every few minutes he employed this incentive. The road was rough, and

at every jolt he was shot upwards into the air, but he always fell into his proper position, and never lost for a moment his self-possession or his balance. At the end of the journey I found we had made about fourteen miles within the hour.

Unfortunately this energetic, enterprising spirit sometimes takes an illegitimate direction. Not only whole villages, but even whole districts have in this way acquired a bad reputation for robbery, the manufacture of paper-money, and similar offences against the criminal law. In popular parlance, these localities are said to contain "people who play pranks" (*narod shalit*). I must, however, remark that, if I may judge by my own experience, these so-called "playful" tendencies are greatly exaggerated. Though I have travelled hundreds of miles at night on lonely roads, I have never been robbed or in any way molested. Once, indeed, when travelling at night in a tarantass, I discovered on awaking that my driver was bending over me, and had introduced his hand into one of my pockets; but the incident ended without serious consequences. When I caught the delinquent hand, and demanded an explanation from the owner, he replied, in an apologetic, caressing tone, that the night was cold, and he wished to warm his fingers; and when I advised him to use for that purpose his own pockets rather than mine, he promised to act in future according to my advice. More than once, it is true, I believed that I was in danger of being attacked, but on every occasion my fears turned out to be un-

founded, and sometimes the catastrophe was ludicrous rather than tragical. Let the following serve as an illustration.

I had occasion to traverse, in company with a Russian friend, the country lying to the east of the river Vetluga—a land of forest and morass, with here and there a patch of cultivation. The majority of the population are Tcheremiss, a Finnish tribe; but near the banks of the river there are villages of Russian peasants, and these latter have the reputation of "playing pranks." When we were on the point of starting from Kozmodemiansk, a town on the right bank of the Volga, we received a visit from an officer of rural police, who painted in very sombre colours the habits and moral character—or, more properly, immoral character—of the people whose acquaintance we were about to make. He related with excited, melodramatic gesticulation his deadly encounters and hair-breadth escapes in the villages through which we had to pass, and ended the interview with a strong recommendation to us not to travel at night, and to keep at all times our eyes open and our revolver ready. The effect of his narrative, like the effect of so many stories that appear in print, was considerably diminished by the prominence of the moral, which was to the effect that there never had been a police-officer, either in Russia or any other country, who had shown so much zeal, energy, and courage in the discharge of his duty as the worthy man before us. We considered it, however, advisable to remember his hint about keeping our eyes open.

In spite of our intention of being very cautious, it was already dark when we arrived at the village which was to be our halting-place for the night, and it seemed at first as if we should be obliged to spend the night in the open air. The inhabitants had already retired to rest, and refused to open their doors to unknown travellers. At length one woman, more hospitable than her neighbours, consented to let us pass the night in an outer apartment (*seni*), and this permission we gladly accepted. My friend, who had not forgotten the graphic descriptions of the police-officer at Kozmodemiansk, made a careful inspection of the place, and declared that the room, though densely populated, contained no bipeds except ourselves. Still, in view of a curious opening in the roof, he thought that we ought to mount guard alternatively during the night, and proposed to take the first watch. This was at once agreed to. When we had carefully fastened the windows by ingenious, extemporised contrivances, I gave him my revolver, for self-defence or for raising an alarm, as circumstances might dictate, and lay down to rest. Our precautions had not been unnecessary. First there was an attempt to open the outer door; then an attempt to open the door from the inner apartment; and, lastly, an attempt to open the window. All these attempts were duly frustrated, and at length I fell asleep; but shortly afterwards I was suddenly aroused by some one tightly grasping my arm. As the light had been in the meantime extinguished, I could see nothing, but I instinctively sprang up, and en-

deavoured to close with my invisible assailant. In vain! He dexterously eluded my grasp, and I stumbled over my portmanteau, which was lying on the floor; but my prompt action revealed who the intruder was, by producing a wild flutter and a frantic cackling! Before my companion could strike a light, the mysterious attack was fully explained. The supposed midnight robber and possible assassin was simply a peaceable hen that had gone to roost on my arm, and, on finding her position unsteady, had dug her claws into what she mistook for a roosting-pole!

Though I have not yet visited the extreme north of Russia, perhaps I ought to insert here some information, which I collected from various sources, concerning the life of the peasantry in that region.

If we draw a wavy line eastward from a point a little to the north of St. Petersburg, as is shown in the map prefixed to the second volume, we shall have between that line and the Polar Ocean what may be regarded as a distinct, peculiar region, differing in many respects from the rest of Russia. Throughout the whole of it the climate is very severe. For about half of the year the ground is covered by deep snow, and the rivers covered with ice. By far the greater part of the surface is occupied by forests of pine, fir, larch, and birch, or by vast, unfathomable morasses. The arable land and pasturage taken together form only about one and a half per cent. of the area. The population is scarce—little more than one to the English square mile—and settled chiefly along the banks of the rivers. The peasantry

support themselves by fishing, hunting, felling and floating timber, preparing tar and charcoal, cattle-breeding, and, in the extreme north, by breeding reindeer.

These are their chief occupations, but they do not entirely neglect agriculture. Their summer is short, but they make the most of it by means of a peculiar and ingenious mode of farming, which, though it may seem strange, not to say absurd, to the English farmer, is well adapted to the peculiar local conditions. The peasant knows of course nothing about agronomical chemistry, but he, as well as his forefathers, have observed that if wood be burnt on a field, and the ashes be mixed with the soil, the probable result is a good harvest. On this simple principle his system of farming is based. When spring comes round and the leaves begin to appear on the trees, a band of peasants, armed with their hatchets, proceed to some spot in the woods previously fixed upon. Here they begin to make a clearing. This is no easy matter, for tree-felling is hard and tedious work; but the process does not take so much time as might be expected, for the workmen have been brought up to the trade, and wield their axes with marvellous dexterity. Besides this, they contrive, it is said, to use fire as an assistant. When they have felled all the trees, great and small, they return to their homes, and think no more about their clearing till the autumn, when they return, in order to strip the fallen trees of their branches, to pick out what they require for building purposes or firewood, and to pile up the remainder in heaps The logs for building or firewood

are dragged away by horses as soon as the first fall of snow has made a good slippery road, but the piles are allowed to remain till the following spring, when they are stirred up with long poles and ignited. The flames first appear at several points, and then, with the help of the dry grass and chips, rapidly spread in all directions till they join together and form a gigantic bonfire, such as is never seen in more densely-populated countries. If the fire does its work properly, the whole of the space is covered with a layer of ashes; and when these have been slightly mixed with soil by means of a light plough, the seed is sown.

On the field prepared in this original fashion is sown barley, rye, or flax; and the harvests, nearly always good, sometimes border on the miraculous. Barley or rye may be expected to produce about sixfold in ordinary years, and they may produce as much as thirtyfold under peculiarly favourable circumstances. The fertility is, however, short-lived. If the soil is poor and stony, not more than two crops can be raised; but if it is of a better quality, it may give tolerable harvests for six or seven successive years. In most countries this would be an absurdly expensive way of manuring, for wood is much too valuable a commodity to be used for such a purpose; but in this northern region the forests are boundless, and in the districts where there is no river or stream by which timber may be floated, the trees not used in this way rot from old age. Under these circumstances the system is reasonable, but it must be admitted that it does not give a very large return for

the amount of labour expended, and in bad seasons it gives almost no return at all.

The other sources of revenue are scarcely less precarious. With his gun and a little parcel of provisions, the peasant wanders about in the trackless forests, and too often returns after many days with a very light bag; or he starts in autumn for some distant lake, and comes back after five or six weeks with nothing better than perch and pike. Sometimes he tries his luck at deep-sea fishing. In this case he starts in February—probably on foot—for Kem, situated on the shore of the White Sea, or perhaps for the more distant Kola, situated on a small river which falls into the Arctic Ocean. There, in company with three or four others, he starts on a fishing cruise along the Murman coast, or, it may be, off the coast of Spitzbergen. His gains will depend on the amount caught, for it is a joint-venture; but in no case can they be very great, for three-fourths of the fish brought into port belong to the owner of the craft and tackle. Of the sum realised, he brings home perhaps only a small part, for he has a strong temptation to buy rum, tea, and other luxuries, which are very dear in those northern latitudes. If the fishing is good and he resists temptation, he may save as much as 100 roubles —about £12—and thereby live comfortably all winter; but if the fishing season is bad, he may find himself at the end of it not only with empty pockets, but in debt to the owner of the boat. This debt he may pay off, if he has a horse, by transporting the dried fish to Kargopol, St. Petersburg, or some other market.

Perhaps the best way to convey an idea of peasant life in this region is to give a family budget which I happen to have at hand. The family consisted of five members: two able-bodied males, one boy, and two women. The year was, on the whole, a good one; for though the fishing was not as successful as it might have been, the harvest was much more plentiful than usual, and supplied the family with food for five months. The following table shows the revenue and expenditure in English money:—

REVENUE.

	£	*s.*	*d.*
Sold 100 pairs of Gelinottes and other Game, at 6d. per pair	2	10	0
„ 200 lbs. of Caviar, at 3d. per lb.	2	10	0
„ Dried Fish	1	5	0
„ Herrings and other Sea Fish	3	5	0
Miscellanea (perhaps from felling timber) ...	2	15	0
	£12	5	0

EXPENDITURE.

	£	*s.*	*d.*
Rye Meal (2,240 lbs.), to supply the deficit of the harvest	7	0	0
Taxes	2	5	0
Clothes and Boots	2	10	0
Fishing Tackle, Powder and Shot, &c.... ...	0	10	0
	£12	5	0

The above budget must not be regarded as anything more than a possibility, but it may perhaps assis the reader who desires to gain at least a vague notion of peasant life throughout a large part of Northern Russia.

It is here in the far North that the ancient folk-lore

—popular songs, stories, and fragments of epic poetry—has been best preserved; but this is a field on which I need not enter, for the reader can easily find all that he may desire to know on the subject in the brilliant writings of M. Rambaud and the very interesting, conscientious works of Mr. Ralston,* which enjoy a high reputation in Russia.

* Rambaud, "La Russie Épique," Paris, 1876; Ralston, "The Songs of the Russian People," London, 1872; and "Russian Folk-Tales," London, 1873.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE MIR, OR VILLAGE COMMUNITY.

Social and Political Importance of the Mir—The Mir and the Family compared—Theory of the Communal System—Practical Deviations from the Theory—The Mir is a Good Specimen of Constitutional Government of the Extreme Democratic Type—The Village Assembly—Female Members—The Elections—Distribution of the Communal Land.

WHEN I had gained a clear notion of the peasant family, and had collected some information regarding the habits and occupations of the peasantry, I turned my attention to the constitution of the village. This was a subject which specially interested me, because I was aware that the Mir is the most peculiar of Russian institutions. Many years before visiting Russia I had read Haxthausen's celebrated work, by which the peculiarities of the Russian village system were first made known to Western Europe, and during my stay in St. Petersburg I had often been informed by intelligent, educated Russians that the rural Commune presented a practical solution of many difficult social problems, with which the philosophers and statesmen of the West had long been vainly struggling. "The nations of the West"—such was the substance of innumerable discourses which I had heard—"are at present on the high-road to political and social anarchy, and England has the unenviable distinction of being foremost in the race. The natural increase of population, together with the

expropriation of the small landholders by the great landed proprietors, has created a dangerous and ever-increasing Proletariate—a great disorganised mass of human beings, without homes, without permanent domicile, without property of any kind, without any stake in the existing institutions. Part of these gain a miserable pittance as agricultural labourers, and live in a condition infinitely worse than serfage. The others have been for ever uprooted from the soil, and have collected in the large towns, where they earn an uncertain living in industrial occupations, or swell the ranks of the criminal classes. In England you have no longer a peasantry in the proper sense of the term, and unless some radical measures be very soon adopted, you will never be able to create such a class, for men who have been long exposed to the unwholesome influences of town life are physically and morally incapable of becoming agriculturists. Hitherto England has enjoyed, in consequence of her geographical position, her political freedom, and her vast natural deposits of coal and iron, a wholly exceptional position in the industrial world. Fearing no competition, she has proclaimed the principles of Free Trade, and has inundated the world with her manufactures—using unscrupulously her powerful navy and all the other forces at her command for breaking down every barrier tending to check the flood sent forth from Manchester and Birmingham. In that way her hungry Proletariate has been fed. But the industrial supremacy of England is drawing to a close, The nations have discovered the perfidious fallacy

of Free-Trade principles, and are now learning to manufacture for their own wants, instead of paying England enormous sums to manufacture for them. Very soon English goods will no longer find foreign markets, and how will the hungry Proletariate then be fed? Already the grain production of England is far from sufficient for the wants of the population, so that, even when the harvest is exceptionally abundant, enormous quantities of wheat are imported from all quarters of the globe. Hitherto this grain has been paid for by the manufactured goods annually exported, but how will it be procured when these goods are no longer wanted by foreign consumers? And what then will the hungry Proletariate do?"

This sombre picture of England's future had often been presented to me, and on nearly every occasion I had been assured that Russia had been saved from these terrible evils by the rural Commune—an institution which, in spite of its simplicity and incalculable utility, West-Europeans seemed utterly incapable of understanding and appreciating.

The reader will now easily conceive with what interest I took to studying this wonderful institution, and with what energy I prosecuted my researches. An institution which professes to solve satisfactorily the most difficult social problems of the future is not to be met with every day, even in Russia, which is specially rich in materials of study for the student of social science.

On my arrival at Ivánofka my knowledge of the

institution was of that vague, superficial kind which is commonly derived from men who are fonder of sweeping generalisations and rhetorical declamation than of serious, patient study of phenomena. I knew that the chief personage in a Russian village is the *Selski Starosta*, or Village Elder, and that all important Communal affairs are regulated by the *Selski Skhod*, or Village Assembly. Further, I was aware that the land in the vicinity of the village belongs to the Commune, and is distributed periodically among the members in such a way that every able-bodied peasant possesses a share sufficient, or nearly sufficient, for his maintenance. Beyond this elementary information I knew little or nothing.

My first attempt at extending my knowledge was not very successful. Hoping that my friend Ivan might be able to assist me, and knowing that the popular name for the Commune is *Mir*, which means also "the world," I put to him the direct, simple question, "What is the Mir?"

Ivan was not easily disconcerted, but for once he looked puzzled, and stared at me vacantly. When I endeavoured to explain to him my question, he simply knitted his brows and scratched the back of his head. This latter movement is the Russian peasant's method of accelerating cerebral action; but in the present instance it had no practical result. In spite of his efforts, Ivan could not get much further than the "Kak vam skazat'?" that is to say, "How am I to tell you?"

It was not difficult to perceive that I had adopted an

utterly false method of investigation, and a moment's reflection sufficed to show me the absurdity of my question. I had asked from an uneducated man a philosophical definition, instead of extracting from him material in the form of concrete facts, and constructing therefrom a definition for myself. These concrete facts Ivan was both able and willing to supply; and as soon as I adopted a rational mode of questioning, I received an abundant supply of most interesting information. This information, together with the results of much subsequent conversation and reading, I now propose to present to the reader in my own words.

The peasant family of the old type is, as we have just seen, a kind of primitive association, in which the members have nearly all things in common. The village may be roughly described as a primitive association on a larger scale.

Between these two social units there are many points of analogy. In both there are common interests and common responsibilities. In both there is a principal personage, who is in a certain sense ruler within, and representative as regards the outside world: in the one case called Khozaïn, or Head of the Household, and in the other Starosta, or Village Elder. In both the authority of the ruler is limited: in the one case by the adult members of the family, and in the other by the Heads of Households. In both there is a certain amount of common property: in the one case the house and nearly all that it contains, and in the other the arable land and pasturage. In both cases there is a certain amount of common responsi-

bility: in the one case for all the debts, and in the other for all the taxes and Communal obligations. And both are protected to a certain extent against the ordinary legal consequences of insolvency, for the family cannot be deprived of its house or necessary agricultural implements, and the Commune cannot be deprived of its land, by importunate creditors.

On the other hand, there are many important points of contrast. The Commune is, of course, much larger than the family, and the mutual relations of its members are by no means so closely interwoven. The members of a family all farm together, and those of them who earn money from other sources are expected to put their savings into the common purse; whilst the households composing a Commune farm independently, and pay into the common treasury only a certain fixed sum.

From these brief remarks the reader will at once perceive that a Russian village is something very different from a village in our sense of the term, and that the villagers are bound together by ties quite unknown to the English rural population. A family living in an English village has little reason to take an interest in the affairs of its neighbours. The isolation of the individual families may not be quite perfect, for man, being a social animal, takes, and ought to take, a certain interest in the affairs of those around him, and this social duty is sometimes fulfilled by the weaker sex with more zeal than is absolutely indispensable for the public welfare; but families may live for many years in the same village without ever becoming conscious of common

interests. So long as the Jones family do not commit any culpable breach of public order, such as putting obstructions on the highway or habitually setting their house on fire, their neighbour Brown takes probably no interest in their affairs, and has no ground for interfering with their perfect liberty of action. Jones may be a drunkard and hopelessly insolvent, and he may some night decamp clandestinely with his whole family and never more be heard of; but all these things do not affect the interests of Brown, unless he has been imprudent enough to entertain with the delinquent more than simple neighbourly relations. Now, amongst the families composing a Russian village, such a state of isolation is impossible. The Heads of Households must often meet together and consult in the Village Assembly, and their daily occupations must be influenced by the Communal decrees. They cannot begin to mow the hay or plough the fallow field until the Village Assembly has passed a resolution on the subject. If a peasant becomes a drunkard, or takes some equally efficient means to become insolvent, every family in the village has a right to complain, not merely in the interests of public morality, but from selfish motives, because all the families are collectively responsible for his taxes. For the same reason no peasant can permanently leave the village without the consent of the Commune, and this consent will not be granted until the applicant gives satisfactory security for the fulfilment of all his actual and future liabilities. If a peasant wishes to go away for a short time, in order to work elsewhere, he must obtain a

written permission, which serves him as a passport during his absence; and he may be recalled at any moment by a Communal decree. In reality he is rarely recalled so long as he sends home regularly the full amount of his taxes—including the dues which he has to pay for the temporary passport—but sometimes the Commune uses the power of recall for the purpose of extorting money from the absent member. If it becomes known, for instance, that an absent member receives a good salary in one of the towns, he may one day receive a formal order to return at once to his native village, and be informed at the same time, unofficially, that his presence will be dispensed with if he will send to the Commune a certain amount of money. The money thus sent is generally used by the Commune for convivial purposes. Whether this method of extortion is frequently used by the Communes, I cannot confidently say, but I suspect that it is by no means rare, for one or two cases have accidentally come under my own observation, and I know that the police of St. Petersburg have been recently ordered not to send back any peasants to their native villages until some proof is given that the ground of recall is not a mere pretext.

In order to understand the Russian village system, the reader must bear in mind these two important facts: the arable land and the pasturage belong not to the individual houses, but to the Commune, and all the households are collectively and individually responsible for the entire sum which the Commune has to pay annually into the Imperial Treasury.

In all countries the theory of government and administration differs considerably from the actual practice. Nowhere is this difference greater than in Russia, and in no Russian institution is it greater than in the Village Commune. It is necessary, therefore, to know both theory and practice; and it is well to begin with the former, because it is the simpler of the two. When we have once thoroughly mastered the theory, it is easy to understand the deviations that are made to suit peculiar local conditions.

According, then, to theory, all male peasants in every part of the Empire are inscribed in census lists, which form the basis of the direct taxation. These lists are revised at irregular intervals, and all males alive at the time of the "revision," from the new-born babe to the centenarian, are duly inscribed. Each Commune has a list of this kind, and pays to the Government an annual sum proportionate to the number of names which the list contains, or, in popular language, according to the number of "revision souls." During the intervals between the revisions the financial authorities take no notice of the births and deaths. A Commune which has a hundred male members at the time of the revision may have in a few years considerably more or considerably less than that number, but it has to pay taxes for a hundred members all the same until a new revision is made for the whole Empire.

Now in Russia, so far at least as the rural

population is concerned, the payment of taxes is inseparably connected with the possession of land. Every peasant who pays taxes is supposed to have a share of the arable land and pasturage belonging to the Commune. If the Communal revision lists contain a hundred names, the Communal land ought to be divided into a hundred shares, and each "revision soul" should enjoy his share in return for the taxes which he pays.

The reader who has followed my explanations up to this point may naturally conclude that the taxes paid by the peasants are in reality a species of rent for the land which they enjoy. So it seems, and so it is sometimes represented, but so in reality it is not. When a man rents a bit of land he acts according to his own judgment, and makes a voluntary contract with the proprietor; but the Russian peasant is obliged to pay his taxes whether he desires to enjoy land or not. The theory, therefore, that the taxes are simply the rent of the land, will not bear even superficial examination. Equally untenable is the theory that they are a species of land-tax. In any reasonable system of land-dues the yearly sum imposed bears some kind of proportion to the quantity and quality of the land enjoyed; but in Russia it may be that the members of one Commune possess six acres, and the members of the neighbouring Commune seven acres, and yet the taxes in both cases are the same. The truth is that the taxes are personal, and are calculated according

to the number of male "souls," and the Government does not take the trouble to inquire how the Communal land is distributed. The Commune has to pay into the Imperial Treasury a fixed yearly sum, according to the number of its "revision souls," and distributes the land among its members as it thinks fit.

How, then, does the Commune distribute the land? To this question it is impossible to give a definite general reply, because each Commune acts as it pleases. Some act strictly according to the theory. These divide their land at the time of the revision into a number of portions or shares corresponding to the number of revision souls, and give to each family a number of shares corresponding to the number of revision souls which it contains. This is from the administrative point of view by far the simplest system. The census list determines how much land each family will enjoy, and the existing tenures are disturbed only by the revisions which take place at irregular intervals. Since 1719 only ten revisions have been made, so that the average length of these intervals has been about fifteen years—a term which may be regarded as a tolerably long lease. But, on the other hand, this system has serious defects. The revision list represents merely the numerical strength of the families, and the numerical strength is often not at all in proportion to the working power. Let us suppose, for example, two families, each containing at the time of the revision five male members.

According to the census list these two families are equal, and ought to receive equal shares of the land; but in reality it may happen that the one contains a father in the prime of life and four able-bodied sons, whilst the other contains a widow and five little boys. The wants and working power of these two families are of course very different; and if the above system of distribution be applied, the man with four sons and a goodly supply of grandchildren will probably find that he has too little land, whilst the widow with her five little boys will find it difficult to cultivate the five shares allotted to her, and utterly impossible to pay the corresponding amount of taxation—for in all cases, it must be remembered, the Communal burdens are distributed in the same proportion as the land.

But why, it may be said, should the widow not accept provisionally the five shares, and let to others the part which she does not require? The balance of rent after payment of the taxes might help her to bring up her young family.

So it seems to one acquainted only with the rural economy of England, where land is scarce, and always gives a revenue more than sufficient to defray the taxes. But in Russia the possession of a share of Communal land is often not a privilege, but a burden. In some Communes the land is so poor and abundant that it cannot be let at any price. Witness, for instance, many villages in the province of Smolensk, where the traveller may see numerous uncultivated strips in the

Communal fields. In others the soil will repay cultivation, but a fair rent will not suffice to pay the taxes and dues.

To obviate these inconvenient results of the simpler system, some Communes have adopted the expedient of allotting the land, not according to the number of revision souls, but according to the working power of the families. Thus, in the instance above supposed, the widow would receive perhaps two shares, and the large household, containing five workers, would receive perhaps seven or eight. Since the breaking-up of the large families, such inequality as I have supposed is, of course, rare; but inequality of a less extreme kind does still occur, and justifies a departure from the system of allotment according to the revision lists.

Even if the allotment be fair and equitable at the time of the revision, it may soon become unfair and burdensome by the natural fluctuations of the population. Births and deaths may in the course of a very few years entirely alter the relative working power of the various families. The sons of the widow may grow up to manhood, whilst two or three able-bodied members of the other family may be cut off by an epidemic. Thus, long before a new revision takes place, the distribution of the land may be no longer in accordance with the wants and capacities of the various families composing the Commune. To correct this, various expedients are employed. Some Communes transfer particular lots from one family to another, as circumstances demand; whilst others make from time to time,

during the intervals between the revisions, a complete re-distribution and re-allotment of the land.

The system of allotment adopted depends entirely on the will of the particular Commune. In this respect the Communes enjoy the most complete autonomy, and no peasant ever dreams of appealing against a Communal decree. The higher authorities not only abstain from all interference in the allotment of the Communal lands, but remain in profound ignorance as to which system the Communes habitually adopt. Though the Imperial Administration has a most voracious appetite for symmetrically-constructed statistical tables—many of them formed chiefly out of materials supplied by the mysterious inner consciousness of the subordinate officials — no attempt has yet been made to collect statistical data which might throw light on this important subject. In spite of the systematic and persistent efforts of the centralised bureaucracy to regulate minutely all departments of the national life, the rural Communes, which contain about five-sixths of the population, remain in many respects entirely beyond its influence, and even beyond its sphere of vision! But let not the reader be astonished overmuch. He will learn in time that Russia is the land of paradoxes; and meanwhile he is about to receive a still more startling bit of information—a statement that should be heralded in by a flourish of trumpets. In "the great stronghold of Cæsarian despotism and centralised bureaucracy," these Village Communes, containing about five-sixths of the population, are capital specimens of representative

Constitutional government of the extreme democratic type!

When I say that the rural Commune is a good specimen of Constitutional government, I use the phrase in the English, and not in the continental sense. In the continental languages a Constitutional government means a government which possesses a long, formal document, composed of many successive paragraphs, in which the functions of the various institutions, the powers of the various authorities, and all the possible methods of procedure are carefully defined. Such a document was never heard of in Russian Village Communes. Their Constitution is of the English type—a body of unwritten, traditional conceptions, which have grown up and modified themselves under the influence of ever-changing, practical necessity. If the functions and mutual relations of the Village Elder and the Village Assembly have ever been defined, neither the Elders nor the members of the Assembly know anything of such definitions; and yet every peasant knows, as if by instinct, what each of these authorities can do and cannot do. The Commune is, in fact, a living institution, whose spontaneous vitality enables it to dispense with the assistance and guidance of the written law.

As to its thoroughly democratic character there can be no possible doubt. The Elder represents merely the executive power. All the real authority resides in the Assembly, of which all Heads of Households are members.

The simple procedure, or rather the absence of all

formal procedure, at the Assemblies, illustrates admirably the essentially practical character of the institution. The meetings are held in the open air, because in the village there is no building—except the church, which can be used only for religious purposes—large enough to contain all the members; and they almost always take place on Sundays or holidays, when the peasants have plenty of leisure. Any open space, where there is sufficient room and little mud, serves as a Forum. The discussions are occasionally very animated, but there is rarely any attempt at speech-making. If any young member should show an inclination to indulge in oratory, he is sure to be unceremoniously interrupted by some of the older members, who have never any sympathy with fine talking. The whole assemblage has the appearance of a crowd of people who have accidentally come together, and are discussing in little groups subjects of local interest. Gradually some one group, containing two or three peasants who have more moral influence than their fellows, attracts the others, and the discussion becomes general. Two or more peasants may speak at a time, and interrupt each other freely—using plain, unvarnished language, not at all parliamentary—and the discussion may become for a few moments a confused, unintelligible noise, "a din to fright a monster's ear;" but at the moment when the spectator imagines that the consultation is about to be transformed into a promiscuous fight, the tumult spontaneously subsides, or perhaps a general roar of laughter announces that some one has been successfully hit by a strong *argumentum ad*

hominem, or biting personal remark. In any case there is no danger of the disputants coming to blows. No class of men in the world is more good-natured and pacific than the Russian peasantry. When sober they never fight, and even when under the influence of alcohol they are more likely to be violently affectionate than disagreeably quarrelsome. If two of them take to drinking together, the probability is that in a few minutes, though they may never have seen each other before, they will be expressing in very strong terms their mutual regard and affection, confirming their words with an occasional friendly embrace.

Theoretically speaking, the Village Parliament has a Speaker, in the person of the Village Elder. The word Speaker is etymologically less objectionable than the term President, for the personage in question never sits down, but mingles in the crowd like the ordinary members. Objection may be taken to the word on the ground that the Elder speaks much less than many other members, but this may likewise be said of the Speaker of the House of Commons. Whatever we may call him, the Elder is officially the principal personage in the crowd, and wears the insignia of office in the form of a small medal suspended from his neck by a thin brass chain. His duties, however, are extremely light. To call to order those who interrupt the discussion is no part of his functions. If he calls an honourable member Durák (blockhead), or interrupts an orator with a laconic "Moltchi!" (hold your tongue!), he does so in virtue of no special prerogative, but simply in accordance with a

time-honoured privilege, which is equally enjoyed by all present, and may be employed with impunity against himself. Indeed, it may be said in general that the phraseology and the procedure are not subjected to any strict rules. The Elder comes prominently forward only when it is necessary to take the sense of the meeting. On such occasions he may stand back a little from the crowd and say, "Well, orthodox, have you decided so?" and the crowd will probably shout, "Ladno! ladno!" that is to say, "Agreed! agreed!"

Communal measures are generally carried in this way by acclamation; but it sometimes happens that there is such a decided diversity of opinion that it is difficult to tell which of the two parties has a majority. In this case the Elder requests the one party to stand to the right and the other to the left. The two groups are then counted, and the minority submits, for no one ever dreams of opposing openly the will of the "Mir."

Nearly half a century ago an attempt was made to regulate by the written law the procedure of Village Assemblies amongst the peasantry of the State Demesnes, and among other reforms voting by ballot was introduced; but the new custom never struck root. The peasants did not regard with favour the new method, and persisted in calling it, contemptuously, "playing at marbles." Here, again, we have one of those wonderful and apparently anomalous facts which frequently meet the student of Russian affairs: the Emperor Nicholas, the Incarnation of Autocracy and the Champion of the Reactionary Party throughout Europe, forces the

ballot-box, the ingenious invention of extreme radicals, on several millions of his subjects!

In the crowd may generally be seen, especially in the northern provinces, where a considerable portion of the male population is always absent from the village, a certain number of female peasants. These are women who, on account of the absence or death of their husbands, happen to be for the moment Heads of Households. As such they are entitled to be present, and their right to take part in the deliberations is never called in question. In matters affecting the general welfare of the Commune they rarely speak, and if they do venture to enounce an opinion on such occasions they have little chance of commanding attention, for the Russian peasantry are as yet little imbued with the modern doctrines of female equality, and express their opinion of female intelligence by the homely adage: "The hair is long, but the mind is short." According to one proverb, seven women have collectively but one soul, and according to a still more ungallant popular saying, women have no souls at all, but only a vapour. Woman, therefore, as woman, is not deserving of much consideration, but a particular woman, as Head of a Household is entitled to speak on all questions directly affecting the household under her care. If, for instance, it be proposed to increase or diminish her household's share of the land and the burdens, she will be allowed to speak freely on the subject, and even to indulge in a little personal invective against her male opponents. She thereby exposes herself, it is true, to uncomplimentary remarks;

but any which she happens to receive she will probably repay with interest—referring, perhaps, with pertinent virulence to the domestic affairs of those who attack her. And when argument and invective fail, she is pretty sure to try the effect of pathetic appeal, supported by copious tears—a method of persuasion to which the Russian peasant is singularly insensible.

As the Village Assembly is really a representative institution in the full sense of the term, it reflects faithfully the good and the bad qualities of the rural population. Its decisions are therefore usually characterised by plain, practical common sense, but it is subject to occasional unfortunate aberrations in consequence of pernicious influences, chiefly of an alcoholic kind. An instance of this fact occurred during my sojourn at Ivánofka. The question under discussion was whether a *kabák*, or gin-shop, should be established in the village. A trader from the district town desired to establish one, and offered to pay to the Commune a yearly sum for the necessary permission. The more industrious, respectable members of the Commune, backed by the whole female population of the locality, were strongly opposed to the project, knowing full well that a kabák would certainly lead to the ruin of more than one household; but the enterprising trader had strong arguments wherewith to seduce a large number of the members, and succeeded in obtaining a decision in his favour.

The Assembly discusses all matters affecting the Communal welfare, and, as these matters have never been legally defined, and there is no means of appealing against

its decisions, its recognised competence is very wide. It fixes the time for making the hay, and the day for commencing the ploughing of the fallow field; it decrees what measures shall be employed against those who do not punctually pay their taxes; it decides whether a new member shall be admitted into the Commune, and whether an old member shall be allowed to change his domicile; it gives or withholds permission to erect new buildings on the Communal land; it prepares and signs all contracts which the Commune makes with one of its own members or with a stranger; it interferes, whenever it thinks necessary, in the domestic affairs of its members; it elects the Elder—as well as the Communal tax-collector and watchman, where such offices exist—and the Communal herd-boy; above all, it divides and allots the Communal land among the members as it thinks fit.

Of all these various proceedings the English reader may naturally assume that the elections are the most noisy and exciting. In reality this is a mistake. The elections produce little excitement, for the simple reason that, as a rule, no one desires to be elected. Once, it is said, a peasant who had been guilty of some misdemeanour was informed by an Arbiter of the Peace—a species of official of which I shall have much to say in the sequel—that he would be no longer capable of filling any Communal office; and instead of regretting this diminution of his civil rights, he bowed very low, and respectfully expressed his thanks for the new privilege which he had acquired. This anecdote may not be true, but it illustrates the undoubted fact that the Russian peasant

regards office as a burden rather than as an honour. There is no civic ambition in those little rural Commonwealths, whilst the privilege of wearing a bronze medal, which commands no respect, and the reception of a few roubles as salary, afford no adequate compensation for the trouble, annoyance, and responsibility which a Village Elder has to bear. The elections are therefore generally very tame and uninteresting. The following description may serve as an illustration.

It is a Sunday afternoon. The peasants, male and female, have turned out in Sunday attire, and the bright costumes of the women help the sunshine to put a little rich colour into the scene, which is at ordinary times monotonously grey. Slowly the crowd collects on the open space at the side of the church. All classes of the population are represented. On the extreme outskirts are a band of fair-haired, merry children—some of them standing or lying on the grass and gazing attentively at the proceedings, and others running about and playing at tig. Close to these stand a group of young girls, convulsed with half-suppressed laughter. The cause of their merriment is a youth of some seventeen summers, evidently the wag of the village, who stands beside them with an accordion in his hand, and relates to them in a half-whisper how he is about to be elected Elder, and what mad pranks he will play in that capacity. When one of the girls happens to laugh outright, the matrons who are standing near turn round and scowl; and one of them, stepping forward, orders the offender, in a tone of authority, to go home at once if she cannot behave

herself. Crestfallen, the culprit retires, and the youth who is the cause of the merriment makes the incident the subject of a new joke. Meanwhile the deliberations have begun. The majority of the members are chatting together, or looking at a little group composed of three peasants and a woman, who are standing a little apart from the others. Here alone the matter in hand is being really discussed. The woman is explaining, with tears in her eyes, and with a vast amount of useless repetition, that her "old man," who is Elder for the time being, is very ill, and cannot fulfil his duties.

"But he has not yet served a year, and he'll get better," remarks one peasant, evidently the youngest of the little group.

"Who knows?" replies the woman, sobbing. "It is the will of God, but I don't believe that he'll ever put his foot to the ground again. The Feldsher has been four times to see him, and the doctor himself came once, and said that he must be brought to the hospital."

"And why has he not been taken there?"

"How could he be taken? Who is to carry him? Do you think he's a baby? The hospital is forty versts off. If you put him in a cart he would die before he had gone a verst. And then, who knows what they do with people in the hospital?" This last question contained probably the true reason why the doctor's orders had been disobeyed.

"Very well; that's enough; hold your tongue," says the greybeard of the little group to the woman; and

then, turning to the other peasants, remarks, "There is nothing to be done. The Stanovoi (officer of rural police) will be here one of these days, and will make a row again if we don't elect a new Elder. Whom shall we choose?"

As soon as this question is asked, several peasants look down to the ground, or try in some other way to avoid attracting attention, lest their names should be suggested. When the silence has continued a minute or two, the greybeard says, "There is Alexei Ivánof; he has not served yet!"

"Yes, yes, Alexei Ivánof!" shout half a dozen voices, belonging probably to peasants who fear they may be elected.

Alexei protests in the strongest terms. He cannot say that he is ill, because his big ruddy face would give him the lie direct, but he finds half a dozen other reasons why he should not be chosen, and accordingly requests to be excused. But his protestations are not listened to, and the proceedings terminate. A new Village Elder has been duly elected.

Far more important than the elections is the redistribution of the Communal land. It can matter but little to the Head of a Household how the elections go, provided he himself is not chosen. He can accept with perfect equanimity Alexei, or Ivan, or Nikolaï, because the office-bearers have very little influence in Communal affairs. But he cannot remain a passive, indifferent spectator when the division and allotment of the land come to be discussed, for the material welfare of every house-

hold depends to a great extent on the amount of land and of burdens which it receives.

In the southern provinces, where the soil is fertile, and the taxes do not exceed the normal rent, the process of division and allotment is comparatively simple. Here each peasant desires to get as much land as possible, and consequently each household demands all the land to which it is entitled—that is to say, a number of shares equal to the number of its members inscribed in the last revision list. The Assembly has, therefore, no difficult questions to decide. The Communal revision list determines the number of shares into which the land must be divided, and the number of shares to be allotted to each family. The only difficulty likely to arise is as to which particular shares a particular family shall receive, and this difficulty is commonly obviated by the custom of casting lots. There may be, it is true, some difference of opinion as to when a re-distribution should be made, but this question is easily decided by a simple vote of the Assembly.

Very different is the process of division and allotment in many Communes of the northern provinces. Here the soil is often very unfertile and the taxes exceed the normal rent, and consequently it may happen that the peasants strive to have as little land as possible. In these cases such scenes as the following may occur.

Ivan is being asked how many shares of the Communal land he will take, and replies in a slow, contemplative way, "I have two sons, and there is myself, so

I'll take three shares, or somewhat less if it is your pleasure."

"Less!" exclaims a middle-aged peasant, who is not the Village Elder, but merely an influential member, and takes the leading part in the proceedings. "You talk nonsense. Your two sons are already old enough to help you, and soon they may get married, and so bring you two new female labourers."

"My eldest son," explains Ivan, "always works in Moscow, and the other often leaves me in summer."

"But they both send or bring home money, and when they get married, the wives will remain with you."

"God knows what will be," replies Ivan, passing over in silence the first part of his opponent's remark. "Who knows if they will marry?"

"You can easily arrange that!"

"That I cannot do. The times are changed now. The young people do as they wish, and when they do get married they all wish to have houses of their own. Three shares will be heavy enough for me!"

"No, no. If they wish to separate from you, they will take some land from you. You must take at least four. The old wives there who have little children cannot take shares according to the number of souls."

"He is a rich Muzhík!" (peasant), says a voice in the crowd. "Lay on him five souls!" (that is to say, give him five shares of the land and of the burdens).

"Five souls I cannot! By God, I cannot!."

"Very well, you shall have four," says the leading

spirit to Ivan; and then, turning to the crowd, inquires, "Shall it be so?"

"Four! four!" murmurs the crowd; and the question is settled.

Next comes one of the old wives just referred to. Her husband is a permanent invalid, and she has three little boys, only one of whom is old enough for field labour. If the revision list were taken strictly as the basis of distribution, she would receive four shares; but she would never be able to pay four shares of the Communal burdens. She must therefore receive less than that amount. When asked how many she will take, she replies with downcast eyes, "As the Mir decides, so be it!"

"Then you must take three."

"What do you say, little father?" cries the woman, throwing off suddenly her air of subservient obedience. "Do you hear that, ye orthodox? They want to lay upon me three souls! Was such a thing ever heard of? Since St. Peter's Day my husband has been bedridden —bewitched, it seems, for nothing does him good. He cannot put a foot to the ground—all the same as if he were dead; only he eats bread!"

"You talk nonsense," says a neighbour; "he was in the kabák (gin-shop) last week."

"And you!" retorts the woman, wandering from the subject in hand; "what did *you* do last parish fête? Was it not you who got drunk and beat your wife till she roused the whole village with her shrieking? And no further gone than last Sunday—pfu!"

"Listen!" says the old man, sternly, cutting short

the torrent of invective. "You must take at least two shares and a half. If you cannot manage it yourself, you can get some one to help you."

"How can that be? Where am I to get the money to pay a labourer?" asks the woman, with much wailing and a flood of tears. "Have pity, ye orthodox, on the poor orphans! God will reward you;" and so on, and so on.

I need not weary the reader with a further description of these scenes, which are always very long and sometimes violent. All present are deeply interested, for the allotment of the land is by far the most important event in Russian peasant life, and the arrangement cannot be made without endless talking and discussion. After the number of shares for each family has been decided, the distribution of the lots gives rise to new difficulties. The families who have manured plentifully their land strive to get back their old lots, and the Commune respects their claims so far as these are consistent with the new arrangement; but often it happens that it is impossible to conciliate private rights and Communal interests, and in such cases the former are sacrificed in a way that would not be tolerated by men of Anglo-Saxon race. This leads, however, to no serious consequences. The peasants are accustomed to work together in this way, to make concessions for the Communal welfare, and to bow unreservedly to the will of the Mir. I know of many instances where the peasants have set at defiance the authority of the police, of the provincial governor, and of the central Government

itself, but I have never heard of any instance where the will of the Mir was openly opposed by one of its members.

In the preceding pages I have repeatedly spoken about "shares of the Communal land." To prevent misconception I must explain carefully what this expression means. A share does not mean simply a plot or parcel of land; on the contrary, it always contains at least four, and may contain a large number of distinct plots. We have here a new point of difference between the Russian village and the villages of Western Europe.

Communal land in Russia is of three kinds: the land on which the village is built, the arable land, and the meadow or hay-field. On the first of these each family possesses a house and garden, which are the hereditary property of the family, and are never affected by the periodical re-distributions. The other two kinds are both subject to re-distribution, but on somewhat different principles.

The whole of the Communal arable land is first of all divided into three fields, to suit the triennial rotation of crops already described, and each field is divided into a number of long narrow strips—corresponding to the number of male members in the Commune—as nearly as possible equal to each other in area and quality. Sometimes it is necessary to divide the field into several portions, according to the quality of the soil, and then to subdivide each of these portions into the requisite number of strips. Thus in all cases every household possesses at least one strip in each field;

and in those cases where subdivision is necessary, every household possesses a strip in each of the portions into which the field is subdivided. This complicated process of division and subdivision is accomplished by the peasants themselves, with the aid of simple measuring-rods, and the accuracy of the result is truly marvellous.

The meadow, which is reserved for the production of hay, is divided into the same number of shares as the arable land. There, however, the division and distribution take place, not at irregular intervals, but annually. Every year, on a day fixed by the Assembly, the villagers proceed in a body to this part of their property, and divide it into the requisite number of portions. Lots are then cast, and each family at once mows the portion allotted to it. In some Communes the meadow is mown by all the peasants in common, and the hay afterwards distributed by lot among the families; but this system is by no means so frequently used.

As the whole of the Communal land thus resembles to some extent a big farm, it is necessary to make certain rules concerning cultivation. A family may sow what it likes in the land allotted to it, but all families must at least conform to the accepted system of rotation. In like manner, a family cannot begin the autumn ploughing before the appointed time, because it would thereby interfere with the rights of the other families, who use the fallow field as pasturage.

It is not a little strange that this primitive system

of land tenure should have succeeded in living into the nineteenth century, and still more remarkable that the institution of which it forms an essential part should be regarded by many intelligent people as one of the great institutions of the future, and almost as a panacea for social and political evils. The explanation of these facts forms an interesting chapter of Russian social history.*

* Part of the above chapter I have already published in an article on "Russian Village Communities," in *Macmillan's Magazine* for June, 1876.

CHAPTER IX.

HOW THE COMMUNE HAS BEEN PRESERVED, AND WHAT IT IS TO EFFECT IN THE FUTURE.

Sweeping Reforms at the Commencement of the Present Reign—Protest against the *laissez faire* Principle—Fear of the Proletariate—English and Russian Methods of Legislation contrasted—Sanguine Expectations—Evil Consequences of the Communal System—The Commune of the Future—Proletariate of the Towns—The present state of things merely temporary.

THE reader is probably aware that a few years ago Russia was subjected to a series of sweeping reforms, including the Emancipation of the serfs and the creation of a new system of local self-government, and he may naturally wonder how it came to pass that a curious, primitive institution like the rural Commune succeeded in weathering the bureaucratic hurricane. This strange phenomenon I now proceed to explain, partly because the subject is in itself interesting, and partly because I hope thereby to throw some light on the peculiar intellectual condition of the Russian educated classes at the present time.

When it became evident, in 1857, that the serfs were about to be emancipated, many people assumed that the rural Commune would be entirely abolished, or at least radically modified. At that time many Russians were enthusiastic, indiscriminate admirers of English institutions, and believed, in common with the orthodox school of political economists, that England had acquired her commercial and industrial superiority by adopting the

principle of individual liberty and unrestricted competition, or, as French writers term it, the "*laissez faire, laissez passer*" principle. This principle is plainly inconsistent with the rural Commune, which compels the peasantry to possess land, prevents an enterprising peasant from acquiring the land of his less enterprising neighbours, and places very considerable restrictions on the freedom of action of the individual members. Accordingly it was assumed that the rural Commune, being inconsistent with the modern spirit of progress, would find no place in the new régime of liberty which was about to be inaugurated.

No sooner had these ideas been announced in the Press than they called forth strenuous protests. In the crowd of protesters were two well-defined groups. On the one hand there were the so-called Slavophils, a small band of patriotic, highly-educated Moscovites, who were strongly disposed to admire everything specifically Russian, and who habitually refused to bow the knee to the wisdom of Western Europe. These gentlemen, in a special organ which they had recently founded, pointed out to their countrymen that the Commune was a venerable and peculiarly Russian institution, which had mitigated in the past the baneful influence of serfage, and would certainly in the future confer inestimable benefits on the emancipated peasantry. The other group was animated with a very different spirit. They had no sympathy with national peculiarities, and no reverence for hoary antiquity. That the Commune was specifically Russian or Slavonic, and a remnant of

primitive times, was in their eyes anything but a recommendation in its favour. Cosmopolitan in their tendencies, and absolutely free from all archæological sentimentality, they regarded the institution from the purely utilitarian point of view. They agreed, however, with the Slavophils in thinking that its preservation would have a beneficial influence on the material and moral welfare of the peasantry.

For the sake of convenience it is necessary to designate this latter group by some definite name, but I confess I have some difficulty in making a choice. I do not wish to call these gentlemen Socialists, because many people habitually and involuntarily attach a stigma to the word, and believe that all to whom the term is applied must be first-cousins to the Pétroleuses. To avoid misconceptions of this kind, it will be well to designate them simply by the organ which most ably represented their views, and to call them the adherents of *The Contemporary*.

The Slavophils and the adherents of *The Contemporary*, though differing widely from each other in many respects, had the same immediate object in view, and accordingly worked together. With great ingenuity they contended that the Communal system of land tenure had much greater advantages, and was attended with much fewer inconveniences than people generally supposed. But they did not confine themselves to these immediate practical advantages, which had very little interest for the general reader. The importance of the rural Commune, they explained, lay not in the present,

but in the future. In possessing it, Russia possessed a sure preventive remedy against the greatest evil of West-European social organisation, the Proletariate. Here the Slavophils could strike in with their favourite refrain about the rotten social condition of Western Europe; and their temporary allies, though they did not believe in their doleful predictions, had no reason for the moment to contradict them. Very soon the Proletariate became, for the educated classes, a species of bugbear, and the reading public came to the conviction that the Communal institutions should be preserved as a means of excluding the monster from Russia.

This fear of what is vaguely termed the Proletariate is still frequently to be met with in Russia, and I have often taken pains to discover precisely what is meant by the term. I cannot, however, say that my efforts were attended with much success. The monster seems to be as vague and shadowy as the awful forms which Milton placed at the gate of the infernal regions. At one moment he seems to be simply our old enemy Pauperism, but when we approach a little nearer we find that he expands to colossal dimensions, so as to include all who do not possess inalienable landed property. In short, he turns out to be, on examination, as vague and undefinable as a good bugbear ought to be; and this vagueness contributed probably not a little to his success.

The influence which the idea of the Proletariate exercised on the public mind and on the legislation at the time of the Emancipation is a very notable

fact, and well worthy of attention, because it helps to illustrate a point of difference between Russians and Englishmen.

Englishmen are, as a rule, too much occupied with the multifarious concerns of the present to look much ahead into the distant future. We profess, indeed, to regard with horror the maxim, "Après nous le déluge!" and we should probably annihilate with our virtuous indignation any one who should boldly profess the principle. And yet we often act almost as if we were really partisans of that heartless creed. When called upon to consider the interests of future generations, we declare that "sufficient for the day is the evil thereof," and stigmatise as visionaries and dreamers all who seek to withdraw our attention from the immediate present. A bold prophet who confidently predicts the near exhaustion of our coal-fields, or graphically describes a crushing national disaster that may soon overtake us, may attract for a little the public attention; but when we learn that the misfortune is not to take place in our day, we placidly remark that future generations must take care of themselves, and that we cannot reasonably be expected to bear their burdens. When we are obliged to legislate, we proceed in a cautious, tentative way, and are quite satisfied with any homely, simple remedies that common sense and experience may suggest, without taking the trouble to inquire whether the remedy adopted is in accordance with scientific theories. In short, there is a certain truth in those "famous prophetick pictures" spoken of by Stillingfleet, which "represent the fate of

England by a mole, a creature blind and busy, continually working under ground."

In Russia we find the opposite extreme. There reformers have been trained, not in the arena of practical politics, but in the school of political speculation. As soon, therefore, as they begin to examine any simple matter with a view to legislation, it at once becomes a "question," and flies up into the region of political and social science. Whilst we have been for centuries groping along an unexplored path, the Russians have—at least, since the beginning of last century—been constantly mapping out, with the help of foreign experience, the country that lay before them, and advancing with gigantic strides according to the newest political theories. Men trained in this way cannot rest satisfied with homely remedies which merely alleviate the evils of the moment. They wish to "tear up evil by the roots," and to legislate for future generations as well as for themselves.

This tendency was peculiarly strong at the commencement of the present reign. The educated classes were profoundly convinced that the system of Nicholas had been a mistake, and that a new and brighter era was about to dawn upon the country. Everything had to be reformed. The whole social and political edifice had to be reconstructed on entirely new principles.

Let us imagine the position of a man who, having no practical acquaintance with building, suddenly finds himself called upon to build a large house, containing all the newest appliances for convenience and comfort.

What will his first step be? Probably he will proceed at once to study the latest authorities on architecture and constructions, and when he has mastered the general principles he will come down gradually to the details. This is precisely what the Russians did when they found themselves called upon to reconstruct the political and social edifice. They eagerly consulted the most recent English, French, and German writers on social and political science, and here it was that they made the acquaintance of the Proletariate.

People who read books of travel without ever leaving their own country are very apt to acquire exaggerated notions regarding the hardships and dangers of uncivilised life. They read about savage tribes, daring robbers, ferocious wild beasts, poisonous snakes, deadly fevers, and the like; and they cannot but wonder how a human being can exist for a week among such dangers. But if they happen thereafter to visit the countries described, they discover to their surprise that, though the descriptions may not have been exaggerated, life under such conditions is much easier than they supposed. Now the Russians who read about the Proletariate were very much like the people who remain at home and devour books of travel. They gained exaggerated notions, and learned to fear the Proletariate much more than we do, who habitually live in the midst of it. Of course it is quite possible that their view of the subject is truer than ours, and that we may some day, like the people who live tranquilly on the slopes of a volcano, be rudely awakened from our fancied security. But this is an

entirely different question. I am at present not endeavouring to justify our habitual callousness with regard to social dangers, but simply seeking to explain why the Russians, who have little or no practical acquaintance with pauperism, should have taken such elaborate precautions against it.

But how can the preservation of the Communal institutions lead to this "consummation devoutly to be wished," and how far are the precautions likely to be successful?

Those who have studied the mysteries of social science have generally come to the conclusion that the Proletariate has been formed chiefly by the expropriation of the peasantry or small landholders, and that its formation might be prevented, or at least retarded, by any system of legislation which would secure the possession of land for the peasants and prevent them from being uprooted from the soil. Now I venture to assert that no institution in the world fulfils this function more effectually than the Russian Communal system. At the present moment about one-half of the whole arable land of the Empire is thereby reserved for the peasantry, and cannot be encroached on by the great landowners or the capitalists, and every peasant by the simple fact of his birth acquires an almost inalienable right to a share of this land. When I have said that the peasantry compose about five-sixths of the population, and that it is extremely difficult—under ordinary circumstances almost impossible—for a peasant to sever his connection with the rural Commune, it will be at once evident that, if the

theories of social philosophers be correct, the formation of a Proletariate in Russia must be almost an impossibility. If the sanguine expectations at present entertained are destined to be realised by experience, then it must be admitted that Russians may justly feel a considerable amount of patriotic exultation, and may fairly lay claim to having successfully solved one of the most important and most difficult of social problems.

But is there any reasonable chance of these sanguine expectations being realised?

This is, doubtless, a most difficult question, but it is not altogether unanswerable. Though it is always hazardous to make predictions, still the present often contains facts which give at least suggestive indications as to the future. Had the project remained in the brain of a solitary philosopher, or in the creed of some school of philosophers, it might perhaps have been reasonably treated with contempt as the ingenious device of a Utopian dreamer; but we cannot treat in this unceremonious fashion an idea that has already assumed a legislative form. However sceptical we may be with regard to social panaceas of all kinds, we ought surely to study attentively this gigantic experiment in social science, on the success of which depends, to a great extent, the material and moral welfare of forty million human beings!

If Russia were content to remain a purely agricultural country, the rural Commune might, I believe, prevent the formation of a Proletariate in the future, as it has already prevented it for centuries in the past.

The periodical re-distributions of the Communal land would secure to every man a portion of the soil, and if the population became too dense, the evils arising from extreme subdivision of the land might be obviated by a regular system of emigration to the outlying, thinly-populated provinces. It seems to me, however, that one part of the recent legislation, elaborated with a view to preserve the Commune, has in reality dealt a serious blow at the fundamental principle of the institution. By the law of 1861 the Commune is enabled to redeem the dues and become absolute proprietor of the land. This is effected by a series of yearly payments extending over nearly half a century, and each family contributes to these payments according to the amount of land which it possesses. Now the question is, Will these peasants, who have been paying for a certain definite amount of land, willingly submit to a re-distribution by which they will receive less than the amount for which they have paid? I think not. The redemption of the dues—or in other words the purchase of the land—has already considerably modified the peasants' conceptions of Communal property, and it may be remarked that in those Communes which have undertaken the redemption operation, re-distributions have become rare, or have entirely disappeared. This important fact seems to have been hitherto entirely overlooked.

Many people believe that the chief danger to which the Commune is exposed lies in an entirely different direction. The peasants, it is said, will very soon come to perceive that the immediate evil consequences of the Communal

system far more than counterbalance its prospective advantages. The first condition of all agricultural progress is some species of land tenure, according to which the farmer may be sure that he will not be summarily ejected, and will enjoy peaceably the fruits of any improvements which he may make; the second condition is that the farmer be free to cultivate as he chooses, untrammelled by any restrictions except such as are necessary to prevent the undue exhaustion of the soil. Neither of these conditions is fulfilled by the Communal system. A re-distribution of the land may at any time be made by Communal decree, and each peasant is obliged to adopt a system of cultivation consistent with the Communal arrangements. Besides this the peasant does not receive a large parcel of land, but a certain number of strips in different fields. According to our notions of agriculture this must be a very bad system of land tenure. We can imagine the dismay of an English farmer who should discover that he had inadvertently taken a farm composed of various little plots situated at considerable distances from each other and from the farmhouse, that he could be summarily ejected by the arbitrary will of the owner, that he must conform to a certain rotation of crops, and that he must never begin to mow his hay or plough up the fallow-land without first receiving the permission of all his neighbours! But it does not necessarily follow that the system is radically bad in a country where the economic and social conditions are entirely different from those with which we are practically acquainted.

How far the Communal system really presents obstacles to agricultural progress is in Russia one of the most hotly-contested questions of the present time. I refrain from entering on the discussion, because I should require to introduce a large quantity of technical details that would very soon exhaust the patience of the ordinary reader. Suffice it to say, briefly, that the obstacles do exist, but that they are not nearly so great as is commonly supposed. If it be said that the Commune prevents the peasant from adopting a system of high-farming, then it may be added that in the same sense the absence of universities on the prairies *prevents* the Red-skins from distinguishing themselves in the domain of classical philology. The truth is that the peasants have not begun to think of anything approaching high-farming, and those of them who possess land of their own outside of the Communal boundary never introduce any improvements. The adherents of the institution declare that any obstacles which really exist might be easily removed by a little simple legislation, and that all possible objections to the system might be obviated by transforming the Commune into an agricultural association, in which all should work in common, and the products—not the land—should be divided. Some prescient persons venture to predict that this transformation will certainly take place, and describe in glowing colours the Commune of the future. Here is a specimen of these prophetic descriptions:—"The peasants have mastered the science of agriculture, and have become so enlightened, that they are always ready to undertake in common the

necessary improvements. They no longer exhaust the soil by selling the grain, but sell merely certain technical products containing no mineral ingredients. For this purpose the Communes possess distilleries, starch-works, and the like, and the soil thereby retains its original fertility. The scarcity induced by the natural increase of the population is counteracted by improved methods of cultivation. If the Chinese, who know nothing of natural science, have succeeded by purely empirical methods in perfecting agriculture to such an extent that a whole family can support itself on a few square yards of land, what may not the European do with the help of chemistry, botanical physiology, and the other natural sciences?"

This last sentence, which must be familiar to all who have read the works of the Communistic School, ought to remind us that we have inadvertently strayed into the very distant future. Let us return.

Even if it be admitted that the Commune effectually prevents the formation of an agricultural Proletariate, the question is thereby only half-answered. Russia aspires to become a great industrial and commercial country, and accordingly her town population is rapidly augmenting. We have still to consider, then, how the Commune affects the Proletariate of the towns. According to the official statistics for Russia Proper, the inhabitants of the towns constitute less than 8 per cent. of the population, whilst those who habitually dwell in the towns amount to about 10 per cent.; in other words, about one million and a quarter of peasants habitually live

in the towns. So say the official statistical tables, but the statement is doubtless greatly under the mark. Many more peasants, though inscribed in rural Communes, habitually spend in the towns a considerable part of the year.

Those peasants who habitually live in the towns compose a peculiar class, with which we have in England no practical acquaintance. In Western Europe the great centres of industry have uprooted from the soil and collected in the towns a great part of the rural population. Those who yielded to this attractive influence severed all connection with their native villages, became unfit for field labour, and were rapidly transformed into artisans or factory-workers. In Russia this transformation could not easily take place. The peasant might work during the greater part of his life in the towns, but he did not thereby sever his connection with his native village. He remained, whether he desired it or not, a member of the Commune, possessing a share of the Communal land, and liable for a share of the Communal burdens. During his residence in the town, his wife and family remained at home, and thither he himself sooner or later returned. In this way a class of hybrids—half-peasants, half-artisans—has been created, and the formation of a town Proletariate has been greatly retarded.

The existence of this hybrid class is commonly cited as a beneficent result of the Communal institutions. The artisans and factory labourers, it is said, have thus always a home to which they can retire when thrown out of work or overtaken by old age, and their children are brought up in the country, instead of being reared

among the debilitating influences of over-crowded cities. Every common labourer has, in short, by this ingenious contrivance, a small capital and a country residence.

In the present transitional state of Russian society, this peculiar arrangement is at once natural and convenient, but amidst its advantages it has many serious defects. The unnatural separation of the artisan from his wife and family leads to very undesirable results, which cannot with propriety be described here, but which are well known to all who are familiar with the details of peasant life in the northern provinces. And whatever its advantages and defects may be, it cannot be permanently retained. At the present time the native industry is still in its infancy. Protected by the tariff from foreign competition, and too few in number to produce a strong competition among themselves, the existing factories can give to their owners a large revenue without any strenuous exertion. Manufacturers can therefore allow themselves many little liberties, which would be quite inadmissible if the price of manufactured goods was lowered by brisk competition. Ask a Lancashire manufacturer if he could allow a large portion of his workers to go yearly to Cornwall or Caithness to mow a field of hay or reap a few acres of wheat! And if Russia is to make great industrial progress, the manufacturers of Ivánovo and Shui will some day be as hard pressed as are those of Bradford and Manchester at the present time. Already some of the great manufacturers give higher wages to those workers who consent to remain the whole year, and the cry is already being raised that

the small manufacturers, who a few years ago made respectable profits, are being ruined by the great factories, which can produce goods at a lower price. Thus the movement has begun, and cannot be stopped by any abstract theories. Very soon a similar change must take place among the artisans. The invariable tendency of modern industry, and the secret of its progress, is the ever-increasing division of labour; and how can this principle be applied if the artisans insist on being agriculturists?

Thus the theory that factory-workers and artisans will long remain agriculturists and preserve their semi-peasant character is at variance with common sense and experience; but may they not at least remain members of the rural Commune, and thus enjoy, in common with their rich employers, the advantages of a country residence? This idea has a seductive charm for those who content themselves with vague conceptions, but it will not bear close inspection. That it is very desirable for every workman to have a house of his own is unquestionable, but the house can scarcely be called a home, when it is situated hundreds of miles from the place where the workman is obliged to live. In this case he has all the burdens without the advantages of family life. The interests of agriculture, too, are opposed to this arrangement. Agriculture cannot be expected to make progress, or even to be tolerably productive, if it is left in great measure to women and children. For many reasons it is not desirable that the link which binds the factory-worker or artisan with the village should be at once

dissolved. In the neighbourhood of the large factories there is no proper accommodation for the families of the workers, and agriculture, as at present practised, can be carried on successfully, though the Head of the Household happens to be absent. But the system must be regarded as simply temporary, and the disruption of large families —a phenomenon of which I have already spoken— renders its application more and more difficult.

Though it may be confidently asserted that the Commune will sooner or later undergo profound modifications, it is not easy to predict what form it will ultimately assume. Perhaps all its peculiarities will disappear, and it will become merely an organ of local self-government; but, on the other hand, perhaps it will modify itself in accordance with new requirements, without abolishing its present fundamental characteristics, and succeed in partly realising the sanguine expectations of its admirers. The facility with which it has hitherto adapted itself to circumstances, and the vigorous vitality which it everywhere displays, tend to justify these expectations; but it is still too soon to speak with confidence. Time alone can solve the problem.

CHAPTER X.

FINNISH AND TARTAR VILLAGES.

A Finnish Tribe—Finnish Villages—Various Stages of Russification—Finnish Women—Finnish Religions—Method of "laying" Ghosts—Curious Mixture of Christianity and Paganism—Conversion of the Finns—A Tartar Village—A Russian Peasant's Conception of Mahometanism—A Mahometan's View of Christianity—Propaganda—The Russian Colonist—Migrations of Peoples during the Dark Ages.

WHEN talking one day with a landed proprietor who lived near Ivánofka, I accidentally discovered that there were in the neighbourhood certain villages, the inhabitants of which could neither speak nor understand the Russian language, and habitually used a peculiar language of their own. With an illogical hastiness worthy of a genuine ethnologist, I at once assumed that these must be the remnants of some aboriginal race.

"Des aborigènes!" I exclaimed, unable to recall the Russian equivalent for the term, and knowing that my friend understood French. "Doubtless the remains of some ancient race who formerly held the country, and are now rapidly disappearing. Have you any Aborigines Protection Society in this part of the world?"

My friend had evidently great difficulty in imagining what an Aborigines Protection Society could be, and ventured to assert that there was nothing of the kind in Russia. On being told that such a society might render valuable services by protecting the weaker against the

stronger race, and collecting important materials for the new science of Social Embryology, he looked thoroughly mystified. As to the new science, he had never heard of it, and as to protection, he thought that the inhabitants of the villages in question were quite capable of protecting themselves. "I could invent," he added, with a malicious smile, "a society for the protection of *all* peasants, but I am quite sure that the authorities would not allow me."

My ethnological curiosity was thoroughly aroused, and I endeavoured to awaken a similar feeling in my friend by hinting that we had at hand a promising field for discoveries which might immortalise the fortunate explorers; but my efforts were in vain. My friend was a portly, indolent man, of phlegmatic temperament, who thought more of comfort than of immortality in the terrestrial sense of the term. To my proposal that we should start at once on an exploring expedition, he replied calmly that the distance was considerable, that the roads were muddy, and that there was nothing to be learned. It was already time to have our *zakuska*—that is to say, a glass of vodka, together with caviar, raw salt herring, pickled mushrooms, or some such viand as an appetiser before dinner. Why should we sacrifice a comfortable dinner and the after-dinner siesta to an expedition of the kind? The villages in question were like other villages, and their inhabitants lived, to all intents and purposes, in the same way as their Russian neighbours. If they had any secret peculiarities they would certainly not divulge them to a stranger,

for they were notoriously silent, gloomy, morose, and uncommunicative. Everything that was known about them, my friend assured me, might be communicated in a few words. They belonged to a Finnish tribe called Corelli, and had been transported to their present settlements in comparatively recent times. In answer to my questions as to how, when, and by whom they had been transported thither, my informant replied that it had been the work of Ivan the Terrible.

Though I knew at that time little of Russian history, I had strong reason to suspect that the last assertion was invented on the spur of the moment, in order to satisfy my troublesome curiosity, and accordingly determined not to accept it without verification. The result showed how careful the traveller should be in accepting the testimony of "intelligent, well-informed natives." On further investigation I discovered, not only that the story about Ivan the Terrible was a pure invention—whether of my friend or of the popular imagination, which always uses heroic names as pegs on which to hang traditions, I know not—but also that my first theory was correct. These Finnish peasants turned out to be a remnant of the aborigines, or at least of the oldest known inhabitants of the district. The Russian peasants, who now compose the great mass of the population, are the intruders.

I had long taken a deep interest in what learned Germans call the *Völkerwanderung*—that is to say, the migrations of peoples during the gradual dissolution of

the Roman Empire, and it had often occurred to me that the most approved authorities, who had expended an infinite amount of learning on the subject, had rarely or never taken the trouble to investigate the nature of the process. It is not enough to know that a race or tribe extended its dominions or changed its geographical position. We ought at the same time to inquire whether it expelled, exterminated, or absorbed the former inhabitants, and how the expulsion, extermination, or absorption was effected. Now, of these three processes, absorption was in all probability the most frequent, and it seemed to me that in Northern Russia this process might be conveniently studied. A thousand years ago the whole of Northern Russia was peopled by Finnish tribes, and at the present day the greater part of it is occupied by peasants who speak the language of Moscow, profess the orthodox faith, present in their physiognomy no striking peculiarities, and appear to the superficial observer pure Russians. And we have no reason to suppose that the former inhabitants were expelled or exterminated, or that they gradually died out from contact with the civilisation and vices of a higher race. History records no wholesale migrations like that of the Kalmyks, and no war of extermination; and statistics prove that among the remnants of those primitive races the population increases as rapidly as among the Russian peasantry.* From these facts I

* This latter statement is made on the authority of Popoff ("Zyryanye i zyryanski krai," Moscow, 1874) and Tcheremshanski ("Opisanie Orenburgskoi Gubernii," Ufa, 1859).

concluded that the Finnish Aborigines had been simply absorbed by the Slavonic intruders.

This conclusion has since been amply confirmed by observation. During my wanderings in these northern provinces I have found villages in every stage of Russification. In one, everything seemed thoroughly Finnish: the inhabitants had a reddish-olive skin, very high cheek-bones, obliquely-set eyes, and a peculiar costume; none of the women, and very few of the men, could understand Russian, and any Russian who visited the place was regarded as a foreigner. In a second, there were already some Russian inhabitants; the others had lost something of their pure Finnish type, many of the men had discarded the old costume and spoke Russian fluently, and a Russian visitor was no longer shunned. In a third, the Finnish type was still further weakened: all the men spoke Russian, and nearly all the women understood it; the old male costume had entirely disappeared, and the old female costume was rapidly following it; and intermarriage with the Russian population was no longer rare. In a fourth, intermarriage had almost completely done its work, and the old Finnish element could be detected merely in certain peculiarities of physiognomy and accent.

The process of Russification may be likewise observed in the manner of building the houses and in the methods of farming, which show plainly that the Finnish races did not obtain rudimentary civilisation from the Slavonians. Whence, then, was it derived? Was it obtained from some other race, or is it in-

digenous? These are questions as to which I do not venture, for the present, even to hazard a conjecture; I am not without hope, however, that I may, by future travel and investigation, be able to throw some light on the subject.

A Positivist poet—or if that be a contradiction in terms, let us say a Positivist who wrote verses—once composed an appeal to the fair sex, beginning with the words, if my memory does not deceive me—

"Pourquoi, O femmes, restez-vous en arrière?"

The question might have been addressed to the women in these Finnish villages. Like their sisters in France, they are much more conservative than the men, and oppose much more stubbornly the Russian influence. On the other hand, like women in general, when they do begin to change, they change more rapidly. This is seen especially in the matter of costume, which has more importance than learned ethnologists are wont to suppose. The men adopt the Russian costume very gradually; the women adopt it at once. As soon as a single woman gets a gaudy Russian dress, every other woman in the village feels envious and impatient till she has done likewise. I remember once visiting a village when this critical point had been reached, and a very characteristic incident occurred. In the preceding villages through which I had passed I had tried in vain to buy a female costume, and I again made the attempt. This time the result was very different. A few minutes after I had expressed my wish to purchase a

costume, the house in which I was sitting was besieged by a great crowd of women, holding in their hands articles of wearing apparel. In order to make a selection I went out into the crowd, but the desire to find a purchaser was so general and so ardent that I was regularly mobbed. The women, shouting "Kupí! kupí!" ("Buy! buy!"), and struggling with each other to get near me, were as importunate as a crowd of Italian beggars, and I had at last to take refuge in the house, to prevent my own costume from being torn to shreds. But even then I was not safe, for the women followed at my heels, and a considerable amount of good-natured violence had to be employed to expel the intruders.

It is especially interesting to observe this transformation of nationality in the sphere of religious conceptions. The Finns remained pagans long after the Russians had become Christians, but at the present time the whole population, from the eastern boundary of Finland Proper—which runs due north from a point near St. Petersburg to the Polar Ocean—to the Ural Mountains, are officially described as members of the Greek Orthodox Church. The manner in which this change of religion was effected is well worthy of attention.

The old religion of the Finnish tribes, if we may judge from the fragments which still remain, had, like the people themselves, a thoroughly practical, prosaic character. Their theology consisted not of abstract dogmas, but merely of simple prescriptions for the ensuring of material welfare. Even at the present day,

in the districts not completely Russified, their prayers are plain, unadorned requests for a good harvest, plenty of cattle, and the like, and are expressed in a tone of childlike familiarity that sounds strange in our ears. They make no attempt to veil their desires with mystic solemnity, but ask in a simple, straightforward way that God should make the barley ripen and the cow calve successfully, that He should prevent their horses from being stolen, and that He should help them to gain money to pay their taxes. Their religious ceremonies have, so far as I have been able to discover, no hidden, mystical signification, and are for the most part rather magical rites for averting the influence of malicious spirits, or freeing themselves from the unwelcome visits of their departed relatives. For this latter purpose many, even of those who are officially Christians, proceed at stated seasons to the graveyards, and place an abundant supply of cooked food on the graves of their relations who have recently died, requesting the departed to accept this meal, and not to return to their old homes, where their presence is no longer desired. Though more of the food is eaten at night by the village dogs than by the famished spirits, the custom is believed to have a powerful influence in preventing the dead from wandering about at night and frightening the living. If it be true, as I am inclined to believe, that tombstones were originally used for keeping the dead in their graves, then it must be admitted that in the matter of "laying" ghosts the Finns have shown themselves much more humane than other races. It

may, however, be suggested that in the original home of the Finns—"*le berceau de la race*," as French ethnologists say—stones could not easily be procured, and that the custom of feeding the dead was adopted as a *pis aller*. The decision of the question must be left to those who know with certainty where the original home of the Finns was.

The Russian peasantry, though nominally Christians, have never differed very widely from the pagan Finns in the matter of religious conceptions. They, too, know little or nothing of theology as we understand the term, and place implicit confidence in rites and ceremonies. Of this I have already spoken in a former chapter.

The friendly contact of two such races naturally led to a curious blending of the two religions. The Russians adopted many customs from the Finns, and the Finns adopted still more from the Russians. When Yumala and the other Finnish deities did not do as they were desired, their worshippers naturally applied for protection or assistance to the Madonna and the "Russian God." If their own traditional magic rites did not suffice to ward off evil influences, they naturally tried the effect of crossing themselves as the Russians do in moments of danger. All this may seem strange to us who have been taught from our earliest years that religion is something quite different from spells, charms, and incantations, and that of all the various religions in the world one alone is true, whilst all the others are false. But we ought to remember that the Finns

have had a very different education. They do not distinguish religion from magic rites, and they have never been taught that other religions are less true than their own. For them the best religion is the one which contains the most potent spells, but they see no reason why less powerful religions should not be blended therewith. Their deities are not jealous gods, and do not insist on having a monopoly of devotion; and in any case they cannot do much injury to those who have placed themselves under the protection of a more powerful divinity.

This simple-minded eclecticism often produces a singular mixture of Christianity and paganism. Thus, for instance, at the harvest festivals, Tchuvash peasants have been known to pray first to their own deities, and then to St. Nicholas, the miracle-worker, who is the favourite saint of the Russian peasantry. This dual worship is sometimes even recommended by the Yomzi —a class of men who correspond to the medicine-men among the Red Indians—and the prayers are on these occasions couched in the most familiar terms. Here is a specimen given by a Russian, who has specially studied the language and customs of this interesting people:* "Look here, O Nicholas-god! Perhaps my neighbour, little Michael, has been slandering me to you, or perhaps he will do so. If he does, don't believe him. I have done him no ill, and wish him none. He is a worthless boaster and a babbler. He does not really honour you, and merely plays the hypocrite. But

* Mr. Zolotnitski, "Tchuvasko-russki slovar," p. 167.

I honour you from my heart; and, behold, I place a taper before you!" Sometimes incidents occur which display a still more curious blending of the two religions. Thus a Tcheremiss, on one occasion, in consequence of a serious illness, sacrificed a young foal to Our Lady of Kazan!

Though the Finnish beliefs affected to some extent the Russian peasantry, the Russian faith ultimately prevailed. This can be explained without taking into consideration the inherent superiority of Christianity over all forms of paganism. The Finns had no organised priesthood, and consequently never offered a systematic opposition to the new faith; the Russians, on the contrary, had a regular hierarchy closely allied to the civil administration. In the principal villages Christian churches were built, and some of the police-officers vied with the ecclesiastical officials in the work of making converts. Besides this there were other influences tending in the same direction. If a Russian practised Finnish superstitions he exposed himself to disagreeable consequences of a temporal kind; if, on the contrary, a Finn adopted the Christian religion, the temporal consequences that could result were all advantageous to him. Many of the Finns gradually became Christians almost unconsciously. The ecclesiastical authorities were extremely moderate in their demands. They insisted on no religious knowledge, and merely demanded that the converts should be baptised. As the converts failed to understand the spiritual significance of the ceremony, they commonly offered no resistance,

so long as the immersion was performed in summer. So little repugnance, indeed, did they feel, that on some occasions, when a small reward was given to those who consented, some of the new converts wished the ceremony to be repeated several times. The chief objection to receiving the Christian faith lay in the long and severe fasts imposed by the Greek Orthodox Church; but this difficulty was overcome by assuming that they need not be strictly observed. At first, in some districts, it was popularly believed that the Icons informed the Russian priests against those who did not fast as the Church prescribed; but experience gradually exploded this theory. Some of the more prudent converts, however, to prevent all possible tale-telling, took the precaution of turning the face of the Icon to the wall when prohibited meats were about to be eaten.

This gradual conversion of the Finnish tribes, effected without any intellectual revolution in the minds of the converts, had very important temporal consequences. Community of faith led to intermarriage, and intermarriage led rapidly to the blending of the two races.

If we compare a Finnish village in any stage of Russification with a Tartar village, of which the inhabitants are Mahometans, we cannot fail to be struck by the contrast. In the latter, though there may be many Russians, there is no blending of the two races. Between them religion has raised an impassable barrier. There are many villages in the eastern and north-eastern provinces of European Russia which have been

for many generations half Tartar and half Russian, and the amalgamation of the two nationalities has not yet begun. Near the one end stands the Christian church, and near the other stands the little Metchet, or Mahometan house of prayer. The whole village forms one Commune, with one Village Assembly and one Village Elder; but, socially, it is composed of two distinct communities, each possessing its peculiar customs and peculiar mode of life. The Tartar may learn the Russian language, but he does not on that account become Russianised. It must not, however, be supposed that the two races are imbued with fanatical hatred towards each other. On the contrary, they live in perfectly good-fellowship, elect as Village Elder sometimes a Russian and sometimes a Tartar, and discuss the Communal affairs in the Village Assembly without reference to religious matters. I know one village where the good-fellowship went even a step further: the Christians determined to repair their church, and the Mahometans helped them to transport wood for the purpose! All this tends to show that under a tolerably good government, which does not favour one race at the expense of the other, Mahometan Tartars and Christian Slavs can live peaceably together.

The absence of fanaticism and of that proselytising zeal, which is one of the most prolific sources of religious hatred, is to be explained by the peculiar religious conceptions of these peasants. In their minds religion and nationality are so closely allied as to be almost identical. The Russian is, as it were, by nature a Christian, and

the Tartar a Mahometan; and it never occurs to any one in these villages to disturb the appointed order of nature. On this subject I had once an interesting conversation with a Russian peasant, who had been for some time living among Tartars. In reply to my question as to what kind of people the Tartars were, he replied, laconically, "Nitchevo"—that is to say, "nothing in particular;" and on being pressed for a more definite expression of opinion, he admitted that they were very good people indeed.

"And what kind of faith have they?" I continued.

"A good enough faith," was the prompt reply.

"Is it better than the faith of the Molokáni?" The Molokáni are Russian sectarians—closely resembling Scotch presbyterians—of whom I shall have more to say in the sequel.

"Of course it is better than the Molokán faith."

"Indeed!" I exclaimed, endeavouring to conceal my astonishment at this strange judgment. "Are the Molokáni, then, very bad people?"

"Not at all. The Molokáni are good and honest."

"Why, then, do you think their faith is so much worse than that of the Mahometans?"

"How shall I tell you?" The peasant here paused as if to collect his thoughts, and then proceeded slowly, "The Tartars, you see, received their faith from God as they received the colour of their skins, but the Molokáni are Russians, who have invented a faith out of their own heads!"

This singular answer scarcely requires a commentary.

As it would be absurd to try to make Tartars change the colour of their skins, so it would be absurd to try to make them change their religion. Besides this, such an attempt would be an unjustifiable interference with the designs of Providence, for, in the peasant's opinion, God gave Mahometanism to the Tartars just as he gave the orthodox faith to the Russians.

The ecclesiastical authorities do not formally adopt this strange theory, but they generally act in accordance with it. There is little official propaganda among the Mahometan subjects of the Tsar, and it is well that it is so; for an energetic propaganda would lead merely to the stirring up of any latent hostility which may exist deep down in the nature of the two races, and it would not make any real converts. The Tartars cannot unconsciously imbibe Christianity as the Finns have done. Their religion is not a rude, simple paganism without theology in the scholastic sense of the term, but a monotheism as exclusive as Christianity itself. Enter into conversation with an intelligent man who has no higher religious belief than a rude sort of paganism, and you may, if you know him well and make a judicious use of your knowledge, easily interest him in the touching story of Christ's life and teaching. And in these unsophisticated natures there is but one step from interest and sympathy to conversion. Try the same method with a Mussulman, and you will soon find that all your efforts are fruitless. He has already a theology and a prophet of his own, and sees no reason why he should exchange them for those which you have to offer. Perhaps he will show you more

or less openly that he pities your ignorance, and wonders that you have not been able to *advance* from Christianity to Mahometanism. In his opinion—I am supposing that he is a man of education—Moses and Christ were great prophets in their day, and consequently he is accustomed to respect their memory; but he is profoundly convinced that, however appropriate they were for their own times, they have been entirely superseded by Mahomet, precisely as we believe that Judaism was superseded by Christianity. Proud of his superior knowledge, he regards you as a benighted polytheist, and may perhaps tell you that the orthodox Christians with whom he comes in contact have three Gods and a host of lesser deities called saints, that they pray to idols called Icons, and that they keep their holy days by getting drunk. In vain you endeavour to explain to him that saints and Icons are not essential parts of Christianity, and that habits of intoxication have no religious significance. On these points he may make concessions to you, but the doctrine of the Trinity remains for him a fatal stumbling-block. "You Christians had a great prophet," he will say, "but you deified him, and now you declare that he is the equal of Allah. Far from us be such blasphemy! There is but one God, and Mahomet is His prophet."

The policy of religious non-intervention has not always been practised by the Government. Soon after the conquest of the Khanate of Kazan in the sixteenth century, the Tsars of Muscovy attempted to convert the new subjects from Mahometanism to Christianity. The means employed were partly spiritual and partly adminis-

trative, but the police-officers seem to have played a more important part than the clergy. In this way a certain number of Tartars were baptised; but the authorities were obliged to admit that the new converts "shamelessly retain many horrid Tartar customs, and neither hold nor know the Christian faith." When spiritual exhortations failed, the Government ordered its officials to "pacify, imprison, put in irons, and thereby *unteach* and frighten from the Tartar faith those who, though baptised, do not obey the admonitions of the Metropolitan." These energetic measures proved as ineffectual as the spiritual exhortations; and Catherine II. adopted a new method, highly characteristic of her system of administration. The new converts—who, be it remembered, were unable to read and write—were ordered by Imperial ukaz to sign a written promise to the effect that "they would completely forsake their infidel errors, and, avoiding all intercourse with unbelievers, would hold firmly and unwaveringly the Christian faith and its dogmas"*—of which latter, we may add, they had not the slightest knowledge. The childlike faith in the magical efficacy of stamped paper here displayed was not justified. The so-called "baptised Tartars" are at the present time as far from being Christians as they were in the sixteenth century. They cannot openly profess Mahometanism, because men who have been once formally admitted into the National Church cannot leave it without exposing themselves to the severe pains and penalties of the criminal code, but they strongly object

* "Ukaz Kazanskoi dukhovnoi Konsistorii." Anno 1778.

to be Christianised. On this subject I have found a remarkable admission in a semi-official article, published as recently as 1872.* "It is a fact worthy of attention," says the writer, "that a long series of evident apostasies coincides with the beginning of measures to confirm the converts in the Christian faith. There must be, therefore, some collateral cause producing those cases of apostasy precisely at the moment when the contrary might be expected." There is a delightful naïveté in this way of stating the fact. The mysterious cause vaguely indicated is not difficult to find. So long as the Government demanded merely that the supposed converts should be inscribed as Christians in the official registers, there was no official apostasy; but as soon as active measures began to be taken "to confirm the converts," a spirit of hostility and fanaticism appeared among the Mussulman population, and made those who were inscribed as Christians resist the propaganda.

It may safely be said that Christians are impervious to Islam, and genuine Mussulmans impervious to Christianity; but between the two there are certain tribes, or fractions of tribes, which present a promising field for missionary enterprise. In this field the Tartars show much more zeal than the Russians, and possess certain advantages over their rivals. The tribes of North-eastern Russia learn Tartar much more easily than Russian, and their geographical position and modes of life bring them in contact with Russians much less than with Tartars. The consequence is that whole villages of

* "Zhurnal Ministerstva Narodnago Prosveshtcheniya." June, 1872.

Tcheremiss and Votiaks, officially inscribed as belonging to the Greek Orthodox Church, have openly declared themselves Mahometans; and some of the more remarkable conversions have been commemorated by popular songs, which are sung by young and old. Against this propaganda the orthodox ecclesiastical authorities do little or nothing. Though the criminal code contains severe enactments against those who fall away from the Orthodox Church, and still more against those who produce apostasy,* the enactments are rarely put in force. Both clergy and laity in the Russian Church are, as a rule, very tolerant where no political questions are involved. The parish priest pays attention to apostasy only when it diminishes his annual revenues, and this can be easily avoided by the apostates paying a small yearly sum. If this precaution be taken, whole villages may be converted to Islam without the higher ecclesiastical authorities knowing anything of the matter.

Whether the barrier that separates Christians and Mussulmans in Russia, as elsewhere, will ever be broken down by education, I do not venture to predict; but I may remark that hitherto the spread of education among the Tartars has tended rather to inflame them with fanaticism. If we remember that theological education always produces intolerance, and that Tartar education is almost exclusively theological, we shall not be surprised to find that a Tartar's religious fanaticism is generally in

* A person convicted of converting a Christian to Islam is sentenced, according to the criminal code, to the loss of all civil rights, and to imprisonment with hard labour for a term varying from eight to ten years ("Ulozhenie o Nakazaniakh," § 184).

direct proportion to the amount of his intellectual culture. The unlettered Tartar, unspoiled by learning falsely so called, and knowing merely enough of his religion to perform the customary ordinances prescribed by the Prophet, is peaceable, kindly, and hospitable towards all men; but the learned Tartar, who has been taught that the Christian is a Kiafir (infidel), and a Müshrik (polytheist), odious in the sight of Allah, and already condemned to eternal punishment, is as intolerant and fanatical as the most bigoted Roman Catholic or Calvinist. Such fanatics are occasionally to be met with in the eastern provinces, but they are few in number, and have little influence on the masses. From my own experience I can testify that during the whole course of my wanderings I have nowhere received more kindness and hospitality than among the uneducated Mussulman Bashkirs. Even here, however, Islam opposes a strong barrier to Russification.

Though no such barrier existed among the pagan Finnish tribes, the work of Russification among them is still, as I have already indicated, far from complete. Not only whole villages, but even many entire districts are still very little affected by Russian influence. This is to be explained partly by geographical conditions. In regions which have a poor soil, and are intersected by no navigable river, there are few or no Russian settlers, and consequently the Finns have there preserved intact their language and customs; whilst in those districts which present more inducements to colonisation, the Russian population is more numerous, and the Finns

less conservative. It must, however, be admitted that geographical conditions do not completely explain the facts. The various tribes, even when placed in the same conditions, are not equally susceptible to foreign influence. The Mordvá, for instance, are infinitely less conservative than the Tchuvash. This I have often noticed, and my impression has been confirmed by men who have had more opportunities of observation. For the present we must attribute this to some occult ethnological peculiarity, but future investigations may some day supply a more satisfactory explanation. Already I have obtained some facts which appear to throw light on the subject. The Tchuvash have certain customs which seem to indicate that they were formerly, if not avowed Mahometans, at least under the influence of Islam, whilst we have no reason to suppose that the Mordvá ever passed through that school.

The absence of religious fanaticism greatly facilitated Russian colonisation in these northern regions, and the essentially peaceful disposition of the Russian peasantry tended in the same direction. The Russian peasant is admirably fitted for the work of peaceful agricultural colonisation. Among uncivilised tribes he is good-natured, long-suffering, conciliatory, capable of bearing extreme hardships, and endowed with a marvellous power of adapting himself to circumstances. The haughty consciousness of personal and national superiority, and the irrepressible thirst for domination, which often transform liberty-loving, law-respecting Britons into cruel tyrants when they come in contact with a

weaker race, are entirely foreign to his character. He has no desire to rule, and no wish to make the natives hewers of wood and drawers of water. All he desires is a few acres of land, which he can himself cultivate; and so long as he is allowed to enjoy these, he is not likely to molest his neighbours. Had the colonists of the Finnish country been men of Anglo-Saxon race, they would in all probability have taken possession of the land and reduced the natives to the condition of agricultural labourers. The Russian colonists have contented themselves with a humbler and less aggressive mode of action; they have settled peaceably among the native population, and are rapidly becoming blended with it. In many districts the so-called Russians have perhaps more Finnish than Slavonic blood in their veins.

But what has all this to do, it may be asked, with the aforementioned Völkerwanderung, or migration of peoples, during the Dark Ages? More than may at first sight appear. Some of the so-called migrations were, I believe, not at all migrations in the ordinary sense of the term, but rather gradual changes, such as those which have taken place, and are still taking place, in Northern Russia. A thousand years ago what is now known as the province of Yaroslaff was inhabited by Finns, and now it is occupied by men who are commonly regarded as pure Slavonians. But it would be an utter mistake to suppose that the Finns of this district migrated to those more distant regions where they are now to be found. In reality they formerly occupied the whole of the North of Russia, and

in the province of Yaroslaff they have been absorbed by the advancing Slavonians. In the West the Slavonians may be said in a certain sense to have retreated, for in former times they occupied the whole of Northern Germany as far as the Elbe. But what does the word "retreat" mean in this case? It means simply that the Slavonians were gradually Teutonised, and then absorbed by the Teutonic race. Some tribes, it is true, swept over a part of Europe in genuine nomadic fashion, and endeavoured perhaps to expel or exterminate the actual possessors of the soil. This kind of migration may likewise be studied in Russia. But I must leave the subject till I come to speak of the southern provinces.

CHAPTER XI.

THE TOWNS AND THE MERCANTILE CLASSES.

Novgorod—General Character of Russian Towns—Scarcity of Towns in Russia—Why the Urban Element in the Population is so small—History of Russian Municipal Institutions—Unsuccessful Efforts to create a *Tiers-état*—Merchants, Burghers, and Artisans—Town Council—A Rich Merchant—His House—His Love of Ostentation—His Conception of Aristocracy—Official Decorations—Ignorance and Dishonesty of the Commercial Classes—Symptoms of Change.

COUNTRY life in Russia is pleasant enough in summer or in winter, but between summer and winter there is an intermediate period of several weeks, when the rain and mud transform a country-house into something very like a prison. To escape this durance vile I determined at the beginning of October to leave Ivánofka, and chose as my head-quarters for the next few months the town of Novgorod.

For this choice there were several reasons. I did not wish to go to St. Petersburg or Moscow, because I foresaw that in either of these cities my studies would certainly be interrupted. In a provincial town I should have much more chance of coming in contact with people who could not speak fluently any of the western languages, and much better opportunities of studying the provincial administration. Of all the chief towns, Novgorod * was

* This town must not be confounded with Nizhni-Novgorod—that is, Lower Novgorod—on the Volga, where the great annual fair is held.

the nearest, and in many respects the most interesting. It has had a curious history—a history much older than that of St. Petersburg or even of Moscow—and it still possesses many venerable historical monuments. Though now a town of third-rate importance—a mere shadow of its former self—it still contains about 18,000 inhabitants, and is the administrative centre of the province in which it is situated.

At about eighty miles from St. Petersburg the Moscow Railway crosses the Volkhof, a rapid, muddy river, which connects Lake Ilmen with Lake Ladoga. At the point of intersection I got on board a small steamer, and sailed up the river for about fifty miles. The journey was tedious, for the country is flat and monotonous, and the steamer did not make more than nine knots an hour. Towards sunset Novgorod appeared on the horizon. Seen thus, in the soft twilight, the town appears decidedly picturesque. On the western bank of the river stands the kremlin, a slightly-elevated piece of ground surrounded by high brick walls, over which peep the pointed cupolas of the cathedral. On the opposite bank stands the larger part of the town, the sky-line of which is agreeably broken by the green roofs and pear-shaped cupolas of many churches. Here and there a bit of foliage indicates the existence of gardens. Spanning the river between the kremlin and the town on the opposite bank is a long stone bridge, half hidden by a high temporary wooden bridge, which does duty—or at least did duty at that time—for the older structure. Many people asserted then

that the temporary structure was destined to become permanent, because it yielded a comfortable revenue to the officials whose duty it was to keep it in repair; but whether this uncharitable prediction has been realised, I know not.

Those who wish to enjoy the illusions produced by scene-painting and stage-decorations should never go behind the scenes. In like manner he who wishes to preserve the delusion that Russian towns are picturesque should never enter them, but content himself with viewing them from a distance. A walk through the streets inevitably dispels the illusion, and proves satisfactorily that irregularity, even when combined with squalor, is not necessarily picturesque.

However imposing Russian towns may look when seen from the outside, they will generally be found on closer inspection to be little more than villages in disguise. If they have not a positively rustic, they have at least a suburban, appearance. The streets are straight and wide, and are either miserably paved or not paved at all. *Trottoirs* are not considered indispensable. The houses are built of wood or stone, generally one-storeyed, and separated from each other by spacious yards. Many of them do not condescend to turn their façades to the street. The general impression produced is that the majority of the burghers have come from the country, and have brought their country-houses with them. There are few or no shops with merchandise tastefully arranged in the window to tempt the passer-by. If you wish to make purchases you must go to the Gostinny

Dvor,* or Bazaar, which consists of long symmetrical rows of low-roofed, dimly-lighted stores, with a colonnade in front. This is the place where merchants most do congregate, but it presents nothing of that bustle and activity which we are accustomed to associate with commercial life. The shopkeepers stand at their doors or loiter about in the immediate vicinity waiting for customers. From the scarcity of these latter I should say that when sales are effected the profits must be enormous. In the other parts of the town the air of solitude and languor is still more conspicuous. In the great square, or by the side of the promenade—if the town is fortunate enough to have one—cows or horses may be seen grazing tranquilly, without being at all conscious of the incongruity of their position. And, indeed, it would be strange if they had any such consciousness, for it does not exist in the minds either of the police or of the inhabitants. At night the streets are not lighted at all, or are supplied merely with a few oil-lamps, which do little more than render the darkness visible, so that cautious citizens returning home late often arm themselves with lanterns. A few years ago an honourable town-counsellor of Moscow opposed a project for lighting the city with gas, and maintained that those who chose to go out at night should carry their lamps with them. The objection was over-ruled, and Moscow was supplied with gas-lamps, but very few of the provincial towns have as yet followed the example of the ancient capital.

* These words mean literally the Guests' Court or Yard. The Gosti—a word which is etymologically the same as our host and guest—were originally the merchants who traded with other towns or other countries.

This description does not apply to St. Petersburg and Odessa, but these cities may for the present be left out of consideration, for they have a distinctly foreign character. The genuine Russian towns—and Moscow may still almost be included in the number—have a semi-rustic air, or at least the appearance of those retired suburbs of a large city which are still free from the jurisdiction of the municipal authorities.

The scarcity of towns in Russia is not less remarkable than their rustic appearance. I use the word here in the popular and not in the official sense. In official language a town means a collection of houses, containing certain organs of administration, and hence the term is sometimes applied to petty villages. Let us avoid, then, the official list of the towns, and turn to the statistics of population. It may be presumed, I suppose, that no town is worthy of the name unless it contains at least 10,000 inhabitants. Now, if we apply this test, we shall find that in the whole of European Russia in the narrower sense of the term—excluding Finland, the Baltic Provinces, Lithuania, Poland, and the Caucasus, which are politically but not socially parts of Russia—there are only 127 towns. Of these, only twenty-five contain more than 25,000, and only eleven contain more than 50,000 inhabitants.*

These facts indicate plainly that in Russia, as compared with Western Europe, the urban element in the population is relatively small; and this conclusion

* These are—St. Petersburg, 668,000; Moscow, 602,000; Odessa, 121,000; Kishinéf, 104,000; Sarátof, 93,000; Kazán, 79,000; Kief, 71,000; Nikoláef, 68,000; Khárkof, 60,000; Túla, 58,000; Berdítchef, 52,000.

is borne out by statistical data. In Russia the urban element composes only a tenth part of the entire population, whereas in Great Britain more than one-half of the inhabitants are dwellers in towns. A serious effort to discover the causes of this would certainly bring out some striking peculiarities in the past history and present condition of the Russian Empire. I have myself made the attempt, and I propose now to communicate a few results of the investigation.

The chief cause is that Russia is much less densely populated than Western Europe. Towards the East she has never had a natural frontier, but always a wide expanse of fertile, uncultivated land, offering a tempting field for emigration; and the peasantry have ever shown themselves ready to take advantage of their geographical position. Instead of improving their primitive system of agriculture, which requires an enormous area and rapidly exhausts the soil, they have always found it easier and more profitable to emigrate and take possession of the virgin land to the eastward. Thus the territory—sometimes with the aid of, and sometimes in spite of, the Government—has constantly expanded, and has already reached Behring's Straits and the northern offshoots of the Himalayas. The little district around the sources of the Dnieper has grown into a great empire forty times as large as France, and in all this vast area there are only about eighty millions of inhabitants. Prolific as the Russian race is, its powers of reproduction could not keep pace with its power of territorial expansion, and consequently the country is

still very thinly peopled. If we take European Russia as a whole, we find that the population is only about fourteen to the square verst, whilst in Great Britain, for a similar area, the average density is about 114. Even the most densely-populated region—the northern part of the Black-earth zone—has only about forty to the square verst. A people that has such an abundance of land, and can support itself by agriculture, is not likely to devote itself to industry, and not likely to congregate in towns.

The second cause which hindered the formation of towns was serfage. Serfage, and the administrative system of which it formed a part, hemmed the natural movements of the population. The nobles habitually lived on their estates, and taught a portion of their serfs to supply them with nearly everything they required; and the peasants who might desire to settle as artisans in the towns were not free to do so, because they were attached to the soil. Thus arose those curious village industries of which I have already spoken.

The insignificance of the Russian towns is in part explained by these two causes. The abundance of land tended to prevent the development of industry, and the little industry which did exist was prevented by serfage from collecting in the towns. But this explanation is evidently incomplete. The same causes existed during the Middle Ages in Central Europe, and yet, in spite of them, flourishing cities grew up and played an important part in the social and political history of Germany. In these cities collected traders

and artisans, forming a distinct social class, distinguished from the nobles on the one hand, and the surrounding peasantry on the other, by peculiar occupations, peculiar aims, peculiar intellectual physiognomy, and peculiar moral code. Now why did these important towns and this burgher class not likewise come into existence in Russia, in spite of the two preventive causes above mentioned?

To discuss this question fully it would be necessary to enter into certain debated points of mediæval history. All I can do here is to indicate what seems to me the true explanation.

In Central Europe, all through the Middle Ages, a perpetual struggle went on between the various political factors of which society was composed, and the important towns were in a certain sense the product of this struggle. However the towns may have originally come into existence, it is certain that they were preserved and fostered by the mutual rivalry of the Sovereign, the Feudal Nobility, and the Church; and those who desired to live by trade or industry were obliged to settle in them in order to enjoy the protection and immunities which they afforded. In Russia there was never any political struggle of this kind. As soon as the Grand Princes of Moscow, in the sixteenth century, threw off the yoke of the Tartars, and made themselves Tsars of all Russia, their power was irresistible and uncontested. Complete masters of the situation, they organised their country as they thought fit. At first their

policy was favourable to the development of the towns. Perceiving that the mercantile and industrial classes might be made a rich source of revenue, they separated them from the peasantry, gave them the exclusive right of trading, prevented the other classes from competing with them, and freed them from the authority of the landed proprietors. Had they carried out this policy in a cautious, rational way, they might have created a rich burgher class; but they acted with true Oriental short-sightedness, and defeated their own purpose. Forgetting the welfare of the governed in their desire to benefit themselves, they imposed inordinately heavy taxes, and treated the urban population as their serfs. The richer merchants were forced to serve as custom-house officers—often at a great distance from their domiciles*—and artisans were yearly summoned to Moscow to do work for the Tsars without remuneration. Besides this, the system of taxation was radically defective, and the members of the local administration, who received no pay and were practically free from control, were merciless in their exactions. In a word, the Tsars used their power so awkwardly and so recklessly that the industrial and trading population, instead of fleeing to the towns to secure protection, fled from them to escape oppression. At length this emigration from the towns assumed such dimensions that it was found necessary to prevent it by administrative and

* Merchants from Yaroslaff, for instance, were sent to Astrakhan to collect the custom-dues.

legislative measures; and the urban population were legally fixed in the towns as the rural population were fixed to the soil. Those who fled were brought back as runaways, and those who attempted flight a second time were ordered to be flogged and transported to Siberia.*

At the beginning of last century began a new era in the history of the towns and of the urban population. Peter the Great observed, during his travels in Western Europe, that national wealth and prosperity reposed chiefly on the enterprising, educated middle classes, and he attributed the poverty of his own country to the absence of this burgher element. Might not such a class be created in Russia? Peter unhesitatingly assumed that it might, and set himself at once to create it in a simple, straightforward way. Foreign artisans were imported into his dominions, and foreign merchants were invited to trade with his subjects; young Russians were sent abroad to learn the useful arts; efforts were made to disseminate practical knowledge by the translation of foreign books and the foundation of schools; all kinds of trade were encouraged, and various industrial enterprises were organised. At the same time the administration of the towns was thoroughly re-organised after the model of the ancient free-towns of Germany. In place of the old organisation, which was a slightly modified form of the rural Commune,

* See the "Ulozhenie" (*i.e.*, the laws of Alexis, father of Peter the Great), cap. xix., § 13.

they received German municipal institutions, with burgomasters, town councils, courts of justice, guilds for the merchants, trade corporations (Tsekhi) for the artisans, and an endless list of instructions regarding the development of trade and industry, the building of hospitals, sanitary precautions, the founding of schools, the dispensation of justice, the organisation of the police, and similar matters.

Catherine II. followed in the same track. If she did less for developing trade and industry, she did more in the way of legislating and writing grandiloquent manifestoes. In the course of her historical studies she had learned, as she proclaims in one of her manifestoes, that "from remotest antiquity we everywhere find the memory of town builders elevated to the same level as the memory of legislators, and we see that heroes, famous for their victories, hoped by town building to give immortality to their names." As the securing of immortality for her own name was her chief aim in life, she acted in accordance with historical precedent, and created 216 towns in the short space of twenty-three years. This seems a great work, but it did not satisfy her ambition. She was not only a student of history, but at the same time a warm admirer of the fashionable political philosophy of her time. That philosophy paid much attention to the *tiers-état*, which was then acquiring in France great political importance, and Catherine thought that, as she had created a *noblesse* on the French model, she might also create a *bourgeoisie*. For this purpose she modified

the municipal organisation created by her great predecessor, and granted to all the towns an Imperial Charter. This charter remained without essential modification down to the commencement of the present reign.

These efforts to create a rich, intelligent *tiers-état* have not been attended with much success. Their influence has always been more apparent in official documents than in real life. The great mass of the population remained serfs, fixed to the soil, whilst the nobles—that is to say, all who possessed a little education—were required for the military and civil services. Those who were sent abroad to learn the useful arts learned little, and made little use of the knowledge which they acquired. On their return to their native country they very soon fell victims to the soporific influence of the surrounding social atmosphere. The "town building" had as little practical result. It was an easy matter to create any number of towns in the official sense of the term. To transform a village into a town, it was necessary merely to prepare an izbá, or log-house, for the district court, another for the police-office, a third for the prison, and so on. On an appointed day a Government official arrived from the provincial capital, collected the officials destined to serve in the newly-constructed or newly-arranged log-houses, ordered a simple religious ceremony to be performed by the priest, caused a formal act to be written, and then declared the town to be "opened." All this required very little creative effort,

but it was not so easy to create a spirit of commercial and industrial enterprise among the population. That could not be effected by Imperial ukaz.

To animate the newly-imported municipal institutions, which had no root in the traditions and habits of the people, was a task of equal difficulty. In the West these institutions had been slowly devised in the course of centuries to meet real, keenly-felt, practical wants. In Russia they were adopted for the purpose of creating those wants which were not yet felt. Let the reader imagine our Board of Trade supplying the masters of fishing-smacks with accurate charts, learned treatises on navigation, and detailed instructions for the proper ventilation of ships' cabins, and he will have some idea of the effect which Peter's legislation had upon the towns. The office-bearers, elected against their will, were hopelessly bewildered by the complicated procedure, and were incapable of understanding the numerous ukazes, prescribing to them their multifarious duties, and threatening the most merciless punishments for sins of omission and commission. Soon, however, it was discovered that the threats were not nearly so dreadful as they seemed; and accordingly those municipal authorities, who were to protect and enlighten the burghers, "forgot the fear of God and the Tsar," and extorted so unblushingly, that it was found necessary to place them under the control of Government officials.

The chief practical result of the efforts made by Peter and Catherine to create a *bourgeoisie* was that the inhabitants of the towns were more systematically arranged in

categories for the purpose of taxation, and that the taxes were increased. All those parts of the new administration which had no direct relation to the fiscal interests of the Government had no inherent life or spontaneous activity. The truth is that the whole system had been arbitrarily imposed on the people, and had no motive power except the Imperial will. Had that motive power been withdrawn, and the burghers left to regulate their own municipal affairs, the system would immediately have collapsed. Rathhaus, burgomasters, guilds, aldermen, and all the other lifeless shadows which had been called into existence by Imperial ukaz, would instantly have vanished into space. In this fact we have one of the characteristic traits of Russian historical development compared with that of Western Europe. In the West, monarchy had to struggle with municipal institutions to prevent them from becoming too powerful; in Russia, it had to struggle with them to prevent them from committing suicide or dying of inanition.

According to Catherine's legislation, which remained in full force down to the present reign, and still exists in its main features, towns are of three kinds: (1) "Government towns" (gubernskie gorodá)—that is to say, the chief towns of provinces, or "Governments" (gubernii)—in which are concentrated the various organs of provincial administration; (2) District towns (uyezdnie gorodá), in which resides the administration of the districts (uyezdi) into which the provinces are divided; and (3) Supernumerary towns (zashtatnie

gorodá), which have no particular significance in the territorial administration.

In all these the municipal organisation is the same. Leaving out of consideration those persons who happen to reside in the towns but in reality belong to the noblesse, the clergy, or the lower ranks of officials, we may say that the town population is composed of three groups: the merchants (kuptsi), the burghers in the narrower sense of the term (meshtchanye), and the artisans (tsekhoviye). These categories are not hereditary castes, like the nobles, the clergy, and the peasantry. A noble may become a merchant, or a man may be one year a burgher, the next year an artisan, and the third year a merchant, if he changes his occupation and pays the necessary dues. But the categories form, for the time being, distinct corporations, each possessing a peculiar organisation and peculiar privileges and obligations.

Of these three groups the first in the scale of dignity is that of the merchants. It is chiefly recruited from the burghers and the peasantry. Any one who wishes to engage in commerce inscribes himself in one of the three guilds, according to the amount of his capital and the nature of the operations in which he wishes to embark, and as soon as he has paid the required dues, he becomes officially a merchant. As soon as he ceases to pay these dues he ceases to be a merchant in the legal sense of the term, and returns to the class to which he formerly belonged. There are some families whose members have belonged

to the merchant class for several generations, and the law speaks about a certain "velvet-book" (barkhatnaya kniga) in which their names should be inscribed, but in reality they do not form a distinct category, and they descend at once from their privileged position as soon as they cease to pay the annual guild dues.

The artisans form the connecting link between the town population and the peasantry, for peasants often enrol themselves in the trades corporations, or Tsekhi, without severing their connection with the rural Communes to which they belong. Each trade or handicraft constitutes a Tsekh, at the head of which stands an elder and two assistants, elected by the members; and all the Tsekhi together form a corporation under an elected head (Remeslenny Golová), assisted by a council composed of the elders of the various Tsekhi. It is the duty of this council and its president to regulate all matters connected with the Tsekhi, and to see that the multifarious regulations regarding masters, journeymen, and apprentices are duly observed.

The nondescript class, composed of those who are inscribed as permanent inhabitants of the towns but who do not belong to any guild or Tsekh, constitutes what is called the burghers in the narrower sense of the term. Like the other two categories, they form a separate corporation with an elder and an administrative bureau.

Some idea of the relative numerical strength of these three categories may be obtained from the following figures. In European Russia the merchant

class (including wives and children) numbers about 466,000, the burghers about 4,033,000, and the artisans about 260,000.

The link of connection between these three categories is the Town Council (Gorodskaya Dûma), the central and highest organ of the municipal administration, with its president the Mayor (Gorodskoi Golová). A few years ago this body was thoroughly re-organised according to the most recent theories of municipal administration; and now all house-proprietors, to whatever class they belong, may take part in its proceedings, and serve as its office-bearers. The consequence of this has been that many towns have now a noble as mayor, but it cannot be said that the spirit of the institution has radically changed. Very few seek election, and those who are elected display very little zeal in the discharge of their duties. Not long ago it was proposed, in the Town Council of St. Petersburg, to insure the presence of a quorum by imposing fines for non-attendance! This fact speaks volumes for the low vitality of these institutions. When such an incident occurs in the capital, we can readily imagine what takes place in the provincial towns.

The development of trade and industry has, of course, enriched the mercantile classes, but it has not affected deeply their mode of life. Amidst new conditions they remain in many respects conservative. When a Russian merchant becomes rich, he builds for himself a fine house, or buys and thoroughly repairs the house of some ruined noble, and spends money freely on inlaid floors,

gigantic mirrors, malachite tables, grand pianos by the best makers, and other articles of furniture made of the most costly materials. Occasionally—especially on the occasion of a marriage or a death in the family—he will give magnificent banquets, and expend enormous sums on gigantic sterlets, choice sturgeons, foreign fruits, champagne, and all manner of costly delicacies. But all this lavish, ostentatious expenditure does not affect the ordinary current of his daily life. As you enter those gaudily-furnished rooms you can perceive at a glance that they are not for ordinary use. You notice a rigid symmetry and an indescribable bareness which inevitably suggest that the original arrangements of the upholsterer have never been modified or supplemented. The truth is that by far the greater part of the house is used only on state occasions. The host and his family live down-stairs in small, dirty rooms, furnished in a very different, and for them more comfortable, style. At ordinary times the fine rooms are closed, and the fine furniture carefully covered. If you make a *visite de politesse* after an entertainment at which you have been present, you will probably have some difficulty in gaining admission by the front door. When you have knocked or rung several times, some one will probably come round from the back regions and ask you what you want. Then follows another long pause, and at last footsteps are heard approaching from within. The bolts are drawn, the door is opened, and you are led up to a spacious drawing-room. At the wall opposite the windows there is sure to be a

sofa, and before it an oval table. At each end of the table, and at right angles to the sofa, there will be a row of three arm-chairs. The other chairs will be symmetrically arranged round the room. In a few minutes the host will appear, in his long double-breasted black coat and well-polished long boots. His hair is parted in the middle, and his beard shows no trace of scissors or razor. After the customary greetings have been exchanged, glasses of tea, with slices of lemon and preserves, or perhaps a bottle of champagne, are brought in by way of refreshment. The female members of the family you must not expect to see, unless you are an intimate friend; for the merchants still retain something of that female seclusion which was in vogue among the upper classes before the time of Peter the Great. The host himself will probably be an intelligent but totally uneducated and decidedly taciturn man. About the weather and the crops he may talk fluently enough, but he will not show much inclination to go beyond these topics. You may perhaps desire to converse with him on the subject with which he is best acquainted—the trade in which he is himself engaged; but if you make the attempt you will certainly not gain much information, and you may possibly meet with such an incident as once happened to my travelling companion, a Russian gentleman, who had been commissioned by two learned societies to collect information regarding the grain trade. When he called on a merchant who had promised to assist him in his investigations, he was hospitably received, but when he

began to speak about the grain trade of the district, the merchant suddenly interrupted him, and proposed to tell him a story. The story was as follows :—

Once on a time a rich landed proprietor had a son, who was a thoroughly spoilt child; and one day the boy said to his father that he wished all the young serfs to come and sing before the door of the house. After some attempts at dissuasion the request was granted, and the young people assembled; but as soon as they began to sing, the boy rushed out and drove them away.

When the merchant had told this apparently pointless story at great length, and with much circumstantial detail, he paused a little, poured some tea into his saucer, drank it off, and then inquired—"Now what do you think was the reason of this strange conduct?"

My friend replied that the riddle surpassed his powers of divination.

"Well," said the merchant, looking hard at him, with a knowing grin, "there was no reason; and all the boy could say was, 'Go away, go away! I've changed my mind; I've changed my mind!'" (poshli von; otkhotyél).

There was no possibility of mistaking the point of the story. My friend took the hint and departed.

The Russian merchant's love of ostentation is of a peculiar kind—something entirely different from English snobbery and American shoddyism. He may delight in gaudy reception-rooms, magnificent dinners, fast trotters, costly furs; or he may display his riches by princely donations to churches, monasteries, or benevolent institu-

tions: but in all this he never affects to be other than he really is. He habitually wears a costume which designates plainly his social position, makes no attempt to adopt fine manners or elegant tastes, and never seeks to gain admission to what is called in Russia *la société*. Having no desire to seem what he is not, he has a plain, unaffected manner, and sometimes a certain quiet dignity, which contrasts favourably with the affected manner of those nobles of the lower ranks who make pretensions to being highly educated, and strive to adopt the outward forms of French culture. At his great dinners, it is true, the merchant likes to see among his guests as many "generals"—that is to say, official personages—as possible, and especially those who happen to have a *grand cordon;* but he never dreams of thereby establishing an intimacy with these personages, or of being invited by them in return. It is perfectly understood by both parties that nothing of the kind is meant. The invitation is given and accepted from quite different motives. The merchant has the satisfaction of seeing at his table men of high official rank, and feels that the consideration which he enjoys among people of his own class is thereby augmented. If he succeeds in obtaining the presence of three generals, he obtains a victory over a rival who cannot obtain more than two. The general, on his side, gets a first-rate dinner, and acquires, in return for the honour he has conferred, a certain undefined right to request subscriptions for public objects or benevolent institutions.

Of course this undefined right is commonly nothing

more than a mere tacit understanding, but in certain cases the subject is expressly mentioned. I know of one case in which a regular bargain was made. A Moscow magnate was invited by a merchant to a dinner, and consented to go in full uniform, with all his decorations, on condition that the merchant should subscribe a certain sum to a benevolent institution in which he was particularly interested. It is whispered that such bargains are sometimes made, not on behalf of benevolent institutions, but simply in the interest of the gentleman who accepts the invitation. I cannot believe that there are many official personages who would consent to let themselves out as table decorations, but that it may happen is proved by the following incident, which accidentally came to my knowledge. A rich merchant of the town of T—— once requested the Governor of the Province to honour a family festivity with his presence, and added that he would consider it a special favour if the "Governoress" would enter an appearance. To this latter request his Excellency made many objections, and at last let the petitioner understand that her Excellency could not possibly be present, because she had no velvet dress that could bear comparison with those of several merchants' wives who would be present. Two days after the interview a piece of the finest velvet that could be procured in Moscow was received by the Governor, from an unknown donor, and his wife was thus enabled to be present at the festivity, to the complete satisfaction of all parties concerned.

It is worthy of remark that the merchants recognise

no aristocracy but that of official rank. Many merchants would willingly give twenty pounds for the presence of an "actual State-Counsellor," who, perhaps, never heard of his grandfather, but who can show a *grand cordon;* whilst they would not give twenty pence for the presence of an undecorated Prince who has no official rank, though he can trace his pedigree up to the half-mythical Rurik. Of the latter they would probably say, "Kto ikh znaet?" —who knows what sort of a fellow he is? The former, on the contrary, whoever his father and grandfather may have been, possesses unmistakable marks of the Tsar's favour, which, in the merchant's opinion, is infinitely more important than any rights or pretensions founded on hereditary titles or long pedigrees.

These marks of Imperial favour the merchants strive to obtain for themselves. They do not dream of *grands cordons*—that is far beyond their most sanguine expectations—but they do all in their power to obtain those lesser decorations which are granted to the mercantile class. For this purpose the most common expedient is a liberal subscription to some benevolent institution, and sometimes a regular bargain is made. I know at least of one instance where the kind of decoration was expressly stipulated. The affair illustrates so well the commercial character of these transactions, that I venture to state the facts as related to me by the official chiefly concerned. A merchant subscribed to a society, which enjoyed the patronage of a Grand Duchess, a considerable sum of money, under the express condition that he should receive in return a St. Vladimir Cross. Instead of the

desired decoration, which was considered too much for the sum subscribed, a cross of St. Stanislas was granted; but the donor was dissatisfied with the latter, and demanded that his money should be returned to him. The demand had to be complied with, and, as an Imperial gift cannot be retracted, the merchant had his Stanislas Cross for nothing.

This traffic in decorations has had its natural result. Like paper-money issued in too large quantities, the decorations have fallen in value. The gold medals which were formerly much coveted and worn with pride—suspended by a ribbon round the neck—are now little desired. In like manner the inordinate respect for official personages has considerably diminished. Twenty years ago the provincial merchants vied with each other in their desire to entertain any great dignitary who honoured their town with a visit, but now they seek rather to avoid this expensive and barren honour. When, however, they do accept the honour, they fulfil the duties of hospitality in a most liberal spirit. When living in a merchant's house in company with an official personage, I have sometimes found it difficult to obtain anything simpler than sterlet, sturgeon, and champagne.

The two great blemishes on the character of the Russian merchants as a class are, according to general opinion, their ignorance and their dishonesty. As to the former of these there cannot possibly be any difference of opinion. The great majority of the merchants do not possess even the rudiments of education. Many of them can neither read nor write, and are forced to keep

their accounts in their memory, or by means of ingenious hieroglyphics, intelligible only to the inventor. Others can decipher the calendar and the lives of the saints, can sign their names with tolerable facility, and can make the simpler arithmetical calculations with the help of a little calculating instrument called "stchetý," which resembles the "abaca" of the old Romans, and is universally used in Russia. It is only the minority who understand the mysteries of regular book-keeping, and of these very few can make any pretensions to being educated men. Already, however, symptoms of a change for the better in this respect are noticeable. Some of the rich merchants are now giving to their children the best education which can be procured, and already a few young merchants may be found who can speak one or two foreign languages and may fairly be called educated men. Unfortunately many of these forsake the occupations of their forefathers and seek distinction elsewhere. In this way the mercantile class constantly loses a considerable portion of that valuable leaven which may ultimately leaven the whole lump.

As to the dishonesty which is said to be so common among the Russian commercial classes, it is difficult to form an accurate judgment. That an enormous amount of unfair dealing does exist there can be no possible doubt, but it must be admitted that in this matter a foreigner is likely to be unduly severe. We are apt to apply unflinchingly our own standard of commercial morality, and to forget that trade in Russia is only emerging from that primitive condition in which fixed

prices and moderate profits are entirely unknown. And when we happen to detect positive dishonesty, it seems to us especially heinous, because the trickery employed is more primitive and awkward than that to which we are accustomed. Trickery in weighing and measuring, for instance, which is by no means uncommon in Russia, is likely to make us more indignant than those ingenious methods of adulteration which are practised nearer home, and are regarded by many as almost legitimate. Beside this, foreigners who go to Russia and embark in speculations without possessing any adequate knowledge of the character, customs, and language of the people, positively invite spoliation, and ought to blame themselves rather than the people who profit by their ignorance and inexperience. All this, and much more of the same kind, may be fairly urged in mitigation of the severe judgments which foreign merchants commonly pass on Russian commercial morality, but these judgments cannot be reversed by such argumentation. The dishonesty and rascality which exist among the merchants are fully recognised by the Russians themselves. In all moral affairs the lower classes in Russia are very lenient in their judgments, and are strongly disposed, like the Americans, to admire what is called in Transatlantic phraseology "a smart man," though the smartness is known to contain a large admixture of dishonesty ; and yet the *vox populi* in Russia emphatically declares that the merchants as a class are unscrupulous and dishonest. There is a rude popular play, in which the Devil, as principal *dramatis persona*, succeeds in cheating all manner

and conditions of men, but is finally over-reached by a genuine Russian merchant. When this play is acted in the Carnival Theatre in St. Petersburg, the audience invariably agree with the moral of the plot.

If this play were acted in the southern towns near the coast of the Black Sea it would be necessary to modify it considerably, for here, in company with Jews, Greeks, and Armenians, the Russian merchants seem honest by comparison. As to Greeks and Armenians, I know not which of the two nationalities deserves the palm, but it seems that both are surpassed by the Children of Israel. "How these Jews do business," I have heard a Russian merchant of this region exclaim, "I cannot understand. They buy up wheat in the villages at eleven roubles per Tchetvert, transport it to the coast at their own expense, and sell it to the exporters at ten roubles! And yet they contrive to make a profit! It is said that the Russian trader is cunning, but here 'our brother' (*i.e.*, the Russian) can do nothing." The truth of this statement I have had abundant opportunities of confirming.

If I might express a general opinion regarding Russian commercial morality, I should say that trade in Russia is carried on very much on the same principles as horse-dealing in England. A man who wishes to buy or sell must trust to his own knowledge and acuteness, and if he gets the worst of a bargain or lets himself be deceived, he has himself to blame. Commercial Englishmen on arriving in Russia rarely understand this, and when they know it theoretically, they are too often unable, from

their ignorance of the language, the laws, and the customs of the people, to turn their theoretical knowledge to account. They indulge, therefore, at first in endless invectives against the prevailing dishonesty; but gradually, when they have paid what Germans call *Lehrgeld*, they accommodate themselves to circumstances, take large profits to counterbalance bad debts, and generally succeed—if they have sufficient energy, mother-wit, and capital—in making a very handsome income. The old race of British merchants, however, is rapidly dying out, and I greatly fear that the rising generation will not be equally successful. Times have changed. It is no longer possible to amass large fortunes in the old easy-going fashion. Every year the conditions alter, and the competition increases. In order to foresee, understand, and take advantage of the changes, one must have far more knowledge of the country than the men of the old school possessed, and it seems to me that the young generation have still less of this knowledge than their predecessors. Unless some change takes place in this respect, the German merchants, who have generally a much better commercial education and are much better acquainted with their adopted country, will ultimately, I believe, expel their British rivals. Already, it is said, many branches of commerce formerly carried on by Englishmen have passed into their hands.

It must not be supposed that the unsatisfactory organisation of the Russian commercial world is the result of any radical peculiarity of the Russian character. All new countries have to pass through a similar state of

things, and in Russia there are already premonitory symptoms of a change for the better. For the present, it is true, the extensive construction of railways and the rapid development of banks and limited liability companies have opened up a new and wide field for all kinds of commercial swindling; but, on the other hand, there are now in every large town a certain number of merchants who carry on business in the West-European manner, and have learnt by experience that honesty is the best policy. The success which many of these have obtained will doubtless cause their example to be followed. The old spirit of caste and routine which has long animated the merchant class is rapidly disappearing, and not a few nobles are now exchanging country life and the service of the State for industrial and commercial enterprises. In this way is being formed the nucleus of that wealthy, enlightened bourgeoisie, which Catherine endeavoured to create by legislation, but many years must elapse before this class acquires sufficient social and political significance to deserve the title of a *tiers-état*. We have here an interesting subject for speculation, but I have already wandered too far from my starting-point. Let us return, therefore, at once to Novgorod.

CHAPTER XII.

LORD NOVGOROD THE GREAT.

The Eastern Half of the Town—The Kremlin—An Old Legend—The Armed Men of Rûs—The Northmen—Popular Liberty in Novgorod—The Prince and the Popular Assembly—Civil Dissensions and Faction-fights—The Commercial Republic conquered by the Muscovite Tsars—Ivan the Terrible—Present Condition of the Town—Provincial Society—Card-playing—Periodicals—"Eternal Stillness."

THAT part of Novgorod which lies on the eastern bank of the river contains nothing that is worthy of special attention. As is the case in most Russian towns, the streets are straight, wide, and ill-paved, and all run parallel or at right angles to each other. At the end of the bridge is a spacious market-place, flanked on one side by the Town-house. Near the other side stand the houses of the Governor and of the chief military authority of the district. The only other buildings of note are the numerous churches, which are mostly small, and offer nothing that is likely to interest the student of architecture. Altogether this part of the town is eminently unpicturesque and thoroughly uninteresting. The learned archæologist may detect in it some traces of the distant past, but the ordinary traveller will find little to arrest his attention.

If now we cross over by the bridge to the other side of the river, we at once find before us something which very few Russian towns possess—a kremlin, or citadel. This is a large and slightly-elevated enclosure, surrounded

by high brick walls, and in part by the remains of a moat. Before the days of heavy artillery these walls must have presented a formidable barrier to any besieging force, but they have long ceased to have any military significance, and are now nothing more than an historical monument. Passing through the gateway which faces the bridge, we find ourselves in a large open space. To the right stands the cathedral—a small, much-venerated church, which can make no pretensions to architectural beauty—and an irregular group of buildings containing the consistory and the residence of the Archbishop. To the left is a long symmetrical range of buildings containing the Government offices and the law courts. Midway between this and the cathedral, in the centre of the great open space, stands a colossal monument, composed of a massive circular stone pedestal and an enormous globe, on and around which cluster a number of emblematic and historical figures. This curious monument, which has at least the merit of being original in design, was erected in 1862, in commemoration of Russia's thousandth birthday, and is supposed to represent the history of Russia in general and of Novgorod in particular during the last thousand years. It was placed here because Novgorod is the oldest of Russian towns, and because somewhere in the surrounding country occurred the incident which is commonly recognised as the foundation of the Russian Empire. The incident in question is thus described in the oldest chronicle:—

"At that time, as the southern Slavonians paid

tribute to the Kozars, so the Novgorodian Slavonians suffered from the attacks of the Variags. For some time the Variags extracted tribute from the Novgorodian Slavonians and the neighbouring Finns; then the conquered tribes, by uniting their forces, drove out the foreigners. But among the Slavonians arose strong internal dissensions; the clans rose against each other. Then, for the creation of order and safety, they resolved to call in princes from a foreign land. In the year 862 Slavonic legates went away beyond the sea to the Variag tribe called Rūs, and said, 'Our land is great and fruitful, but there is no order in it; come and reign and rule over us.' Three brothers accepted this invitation, and appeared with their armed followers. The eldest of these, Rurik, settled in Novgorod; the second, Sineus, at Byelo-ozero; and the third, Truvor, in Isborsk. From them our land is called Rūs. After two years the brothers of Rurik died. He alone began to rule over the Novgorod district, and confided to his men the administration of the principal towns."

This simple legend has given rise to a vast amount of learned controversy, and historical investigators have fought valiantly with each other about the important question, Who were those armed men of Rūs? For a long time the commonly received opinion was that they were Normans from Scandinavia. The Slavophils accepted the legend literally in this sense, and constructed upon it an ingenious theory of Russian history. The nations of the West, they said, were conquered by invaders, who seized the country and created the feudal

system for their own benefit; hence the history of Western Europe is a long tale of bloody struggles between conquerors and conquered, and at the present day the old enmity still lives in the political rivalry of the different social classes. The Russo-Slavonians, on the contrary, were not conquered, but voluntarily invited a foreign prince to come and rule over them; hence the whole social and political development of Russia has been essentially peaceful, and the Russian people know nothing of social castes or feudalism. Though this theory afforded some nourishment for patriotic self-satisfaction, it displeased extreme patriots, who did not like the idea that order was first established in their country by men of Teutonic race. These preferred to adopt the theory that Rurik and his companions were Slavonians from the shores of the Baltic. At the present time the general tendency seems to be to regard the story as a childish invention of the monkish chroniclers.

Though I have myself devoted to the study of this question more time and labour than perhaps the subject deserves, I have no intention of inviting the reader to follow me through the tedious controversy. Suffice it to say that, after careful consideration, and with all due deference to recent historians, I am inclined to adopt the old theory, and to regard the Normans of Scandinavia as in a certain sense the founders of the Russian Empire. We know from other sources that during the ninth century there was a great exodus from Scandinavia. Greedy of booty, and fired with the spirit of adventure, the Northmen, in their light open boats,

swept along the coasts of Germany, France, Spain, Greece, and Asia Minor, pillaging the towns and villages near the sea, and entering into the heart of the country by means of the rivers. At first they were mere marauders, and showed everywhere such ferocity and cruelty, that they came to be regarded as something akin to plagues and famines, and the faithful added a new petition to one of the prayers in the Litany, "From the wrath and malice of the Normans, O Lord, deliver us!" But towards the middle of the century the movement changed its character. The raids became military invasions, and the invaders sought to conquer the lands which they had formerly plundered, "ut acquirant sibi spoliando regna quibus possent vivere pace perpetua." The chiefs embraced Christianity, married the daughters or sisters of the reigning princes, and obtained the conquered territories as feudal grants. Thus arose Norman principalities in the Low Countries, in France, in Italy, and in Sicily; and the Northmen, rapidly blending with the native population, soon showed as much political talent as they had formerly shown reckless and destructive valour.

It would have been strange indeed if these adventurers, who succeeded in reaching Asia Minor and the coasts of North America, should have overlooked Russia, which lay, as it were, at their very doors. The Volkhof, flowing through Novgorod, forms part of a great water-way, which affords almost uninterrupted water-communication between the Baltic and the Black Sea; and we know that some time afterwards

the Scandinavians used this route in their journeys to Constantinople. The change which the Scandinavian movement underwent elsewhere is clearly indicated by the Russian chronicles: first, the Variags came as collectors of tribute, and raised so much popular opposition that they were expelled, and then they came as rulers, and settled in the country. Whether they really came on invitation may be doubted, but that they adopted the language, religion, and customs of their adopted country does not militate against the assertion that they were Normans. On the contrary, we have here rather an additional confirmation, for elsewhere the Normans did likewise. In the North of France they adopted almost at once the French language and religion, and the son and successor of the famous Rollo was sometimes reproached with being more French than Norman.*

Though it is difficult to decide how far the legend is literally true, there can be no possible doubt that the event which it more or less accurately describes had an important influence on Russian history. From that time dates the rapid expansion of the Russo-Slavonians —a movement that is still going on at the present day. To the north, the east, and the south, new principalities were formed and governed by men who all claimed to be descendants of Rurik, and down to the end of the sixteenth century no one outside of this great family ever attempted to establish independent sovereignty in Russia.

* Strinnholm, "Die Vikingerzüge" (Hamburg, 1839), I., p. 135.

For six centuries after the so-called invitation of Rurik the city on the Volkhof had a strange chequered history. Rapidly it conquered the neighbouring Finnish tribes, and grew into a powerful independent state, with a territory extending to the Gulf of Finland, and northwards to the White Sea. At the same time its commercial importance increased, and it became an outpost of the Hanseatic League. In this work the descendants of Rurik played an important part, but they were always kept in strict subordination to the popular will. Political freedom kept pace with commercial prosperity. What means Rurik employed for establishing and preserving order we know not, but we know that his successors in Novgorod possessed merely such authority as was freely granted them by the people. The supreme power resided, not in the prince, but in the assembly of the citizens called together in the market-place by the sound of the great bell. This assembly made laws for the prince as well as for the people, entered into alliances with foreign powers, declared war and concluded peace, imposed taxes, raised troops, and not only elected the magistrates, but also judged and deposed them when it thought fit. The prince was little more than the hired commander of the troops and the president of the judicial administration. When entering on his functions he had to take a solemn oath that he would faithfully observe the ancient laws and usages, and if he failed to fulfil his promise he was sure to be summarily deposed and expelled. The people had an old rhymed proverb, "*Koli khud knyaz, tak v gryaz!*" ("If the prince is bad,

into the mud with him!"), and they habitually acted according to it. So unpleasant, indeed, was the task of ruling those sturdy, stiff-necked burghers, that some princes refused to undertake it, and others, having tried it for a time, voluntarily laid down their authority and departed. But these frequent depositions and abdications—as many as thirty took place in the course of a single century—did not permanently disturb the existing order of things. The descendants of Rurik were numerous, and there were always plenty of candidates for the vacant place. The municipal republic continued to grow in strength and in riches, and during the thirteenth and fourteenth century it proudly styled itself "Lord Novgorod the Great" (*Gospodin Veliki Novgorod*).

"Then came a change, as all things human change." To the East arose the principality of Moscow—not an old, rich municipal republic, but a young, vigorous State, ruled by a line of crafty, energetic, ambitious, and unscrupulous princes, who were freeing the country from the Tartar yoke and gradually annexing by fair means and foul the neighbouring principalities to their own dominions. At the same time, and in a similar manner, the Lithuanian Princes to the Westward united various small principalities, and formed a powerful independent State. Thus Novgorod found itself between two powerful aggressive neighbours. Under a strong government it might have held its own against these rivals and successfully maintained its independence, but its strength was already undermined by internal dissensions. Political liberty had led to anarchy. Again and again

on that great open space where the national monument now stands, and in the market-place on the other side of the river, scenes of disorder and bloodshed took place, and more than once on the bridge battles were fought by contending factions. Sometimes it was a contest between rival families, and sometimes a struggle between the municipal aristocracy, who sought to monopolise the political power, and the common people, who wished to have a large share in the administration. A State thus divided against itself could not long resist the aggressive tendencies of powerful neighbours. Artful diplomacy could but postpone the evil day, and it required no great political foresight to predict that sooner or later Novgorod must become Lithuanian or Muscovite. The great families inclined to Lithuania, but the popular party and the clergy looked to Moscow for assistance, and the Grand Princes of Muscovy ultimately gained the prize.

The barbarous way in which the Grand Princes effected the annexation shows how thoroughly they had imbibed the spirit of Tartar statesmanship. Thousands of families were transported to Moscow, and Muscovite families put in their place; and when, in spite of this, the old spirit revived, Ivan the Terrible determined to apply the method of physical extermination, which he had found so effectual in breaking the power of his own nobles. Advancing with a large army, which met with no resistance, he devastated the country with fire and sword, and during a residence of five weeks in the town, he put the inhabitants to death with a ruthless ferocity which has perhaps never been surpassed even by Oriental

despots. If these old walls could speak they would have many a horrible tale to tell. Enough has been preserved in the chronicles to give us some idea of this awful time. Monks and priests were subjected to the Tartar punishment called *pravezh*, which consisted in tying the victim to a stake, and flogging him daily until a certain sum of money was paid for his release. The merchants and officials were tortured with fire, and then thrown from the bridge with their wives and children into the river. Lest any of them should escape by swimming, boatfuls of soldiers despatched those who were not killed by the fall. At the present day there is a curious bubbling immediately below the bridge, which prevents the water from freezing in winter, and according to popular belief this is caused by the spirits of those who perished at that time. Of those who were murdered in the villages there is no record, but in the town alone no less than 60,000 human beings are said to have been butchered—an awful hecatomb on the altar of national unity and autocratic power!*

This tragic scene, which occurred in 1570, closes the history of Novgorod as an independent State. Its real independence had long since ceased to exist, and now the last spark of the old spirit was extinguished. The Tsars could not suffer even a shadow of political independence to exist within their dominions. The proud municipal republic sunk to the level of the ordinary provincial

* Those who care to know more about Ivan the Terrible and his predecessors may consult Mr. Ralston's admirable little work, "Early Russian History," London, 1874.

towns, and since that time it has never shown any symptoms of recovering its ancient commercial prosperity.

In the old days, when many Hanseatic merchants annually visited the city, and when the market-place, the bridge, and the kremlin were often the scene of violent political struggles, Novgorod must have been an interesting place to live in; but now its glory has departed, and in respect of social resources it is not even a first-rate provincial town. Kief, Kazan, and other towns which are situated at a great distance from the capital in districts fertile enough to induce the nobles to farm their own land, are in their way little semi-independent centres of civilisation. They contain a theatre, a library, two or three clubs, and many large houses belonging to rich landed proprietors, who spend the summer on their estates and come into town for the winter months. These proprietors, together with the resident officials, form a numerous society, and during the winter, dinner-parties, balls, and other social gatherings are by no means unfrequent. In Novgorod the society is much more limited. It does not, like Kazan, Kief, and Kharkof, possess a university, and it contains no houses belonging to wealthy nobles. The few proprietors of the province who live on their estates, and are rich enough to spend part of the year in town, prefer St. Petersburg for their winter residence. The society, therefore, is composed exclusively of officials and of the officers who happen to be quartered in the town or the immediate vicinity. Of all the people whose acquaintance I made I can recall only two men who did

not occupy some official position, civil or military. One of these was a retired doctor, who was attempting to farm on scientific principles, and who, I believe, soon afterwards gave up the attempt and emigrated elsewhere. The other was a Polish bishop, who had been compromised in the insurrection of 1863, and was condemned to live here under police supervision. This latter could scarcely be said to belong to the society of the place; though he sometimes appeared at the unceremonious weekly receptions given by the Governor, and was invariably treated by all present with marked respect, he could not but feel that he was in a false position, and he was rarely or never seen in other houses.

The society of a town like Novgorod is sure to contain a good many people of average education and agreeable manners, but it is sure to be neither brilliant nor interesting. Though it is constantly undergoing a gradual renovation by the received system of frequently transferring officials from one town to another, it preserves faithfully, in spite of the new blood which it thus receives, its essentially languid character. When a new official arrives he exchanges visits with all the notables, and for a few days he produces quite a sensation in the little community. If he appears at social gatherings he is much talked to, and if he does not appear he is much talked about. His former history is repeatedly narrated, and his various merits and defects assiduously discussed. If he is married, and has brought his wife with him, the field of comment and discussion is very much enlarged. The first time that madame appears in society

she is "the cynosure of neighbouring eyes." Her features, her complexion, her hair, her dress, and her jewellery are carefully noted and criticised. Perhaps she has brought with her, from the capital or from abroad, some dresses of the newest fashion. As soon as this is discovered she at once becomes an object of special curiosity to all the ladies, and of envious jealousy to those who regard as a personal grievance the presence of a toilette finer or more fashionable than their own. Her demeanour, too, is very carefully observed. If she is friendly and affable in manner, she is patronised; if she is distant and reserved, she is condemned as proud and pretentious. In either case she is pretty sure to form a close intimacy with some one of the older female residents, and for a few weeks the two ladies are inseparable, till some incautious word or act disturbs the new-born friendship, and the devoted friends become bitter enemies. Voluntarily or involuntarily the husbands get mixed up in the quarrel. Highly undesirable qualities are discovered in the characters of all parties concerned, and are made the subject of unfriendly comment. Then the feud subsides, and some new feud of a similar kind comes to occupy the public attention. Mrs. A. wonders how her friends Mr. and Mrs. B. can afford to lose considerable sums every evening at cards, and suspects that they are getting into debt or starving themselves and their children; in her humble opinion they would do well to give fewer supper-parties, and to refrain from poisoning their guests. The bosom friend to whom this is related retails it directly or indirectly to Mrs. B., and

Mrs. B. naturally retaliates. Here is a new quarrel, which for some time affords material for conversation. When there is no quarrel there is sure to be a bit of scandal afloat. Though Russian provincial society is not at all prude, and leans rather to the side of extreme leniency, it cannot entirely overlook *les convenances.* Madame C. has always a large number of male admirers, and to this there can be no reasonable objection so long as her husband does not complain, but really she parades her preference for Mr. X. at balls and parties a little too conspicuously. Then there is Madame D., with the big dreamy eyes. How can she remain in the place after her husband was killed in a duel by a brother officer? Ostensibly the cause of the quarrel was a trifling incident at the card-table, but every one knows that in reality she was the cause of the deadly encounter. And so on, and so on. In the absence of graver interests society naturally bestows inordinate attention on the private affairs of its members; and quarrelling, backbiting and scandal-mongery help indolent people to kill the time that hangs heavily on their hands.

Potent as these instruments are, they are not sufficient to kill all the leisure hours. In the forenoons the gentlemen are occupied with their official duties, whilst the ladies go out shopping or pay visits, and devote any time that remains to their household duties and their children; but the day's work is over about four o'clock, and the long evening remains to be filled up. The after-dinner siesta may dispose of an hour or an hour and a half, but about seven o'clock some

definite occupation has to be found. As it is impossible to devote the whole evening to discussing the ordinary news of the day, recourse is almost invariably had to card-playing, which is indulged in to an extent that we have no conception of in Western Europe. Hour after hour the Russians of both sexes will sit in a hot room, filled with a constantly-renewed cloud of tobacco-smoke—in the production of which some of the ladies perhaps take part—and silently play "Préférence" or "Yarolash." Those who for some reason are obliged to be alone can amuse themselves with "Patience," an ingenious game in which no partner is required. In the two former games the stakes are commonly very small, but the sittings are often continued so long that a player may win or lose two or three pounds sterling. It is no unusual thing for gentlemen to play for eight or nine hours at a time. At the weekly club dinners, before coffee had been served, nearly all present used to rush off impatiently to the card-room, and sit there placidly from five o'clock in the afternoon till one or two o'clock in the morning! When I asked my friends why they devoted so much time to this unprofitable occupation, they always gave me pretty much the same answer. "What are we to do? We have been reading or writing official papers all day, and in the evening we like to have a little relaxation. When we come together we have very little to talk about, for we have all read the daily papers and nothing more. The best thing we can do is to sit down at the card-table, where we can

spend our time pleasantly, without the necessity of talking."

In addition to the daily papers, some people read the monthly periodicals—big, thick volumes, containing several serious articles on historical and social subjects, sections of one or two novels, satirical sketches, and a long review of home and foreign politics on the model of those which appear regularly in the *Revue des Deux Mondes*. Several of these periodicals are very ably conducted, and offer to their readers a large amount of valuable information; but I have noticed that the leaves of the more serious part often remain uncut. The translation of a novel by Emile Zola or Wilkie Collins finds many more readers than an article by an historian or a political economist. As to books, they seem to be very little read, for during all the time I lived in Novgorod I never discovered a bookseller's shop, and when I required books I had to get them sent from St. Petersburg. The local administration, it is true, conceived the project of forming a museum and circulating library, but I am not sure that the project was ever realised. Of all the magnificent projects that are formed in Russia, only a very small percentage come into existence, and these are too often very short-lived. The Russians have learned theoretically what are the wants of the most advanced civilisation, and are ever ready to rush into the grand schemes which their theoretical knowledge suggests; but very few of them really and permanently feel these wants, and consequently the institutions artificially formed to satisfy them very soon languish

and die. In the provincial towns the shops for the sale of gastronomic delicacies spring up and flourish, whilst shops for the sale of intellectual food are rarely to be met with. The conclusion to be drawn from these facts is obvious.

About the beginning of December the ordinary monotony of Novgorod life is a little relieved by the annual Provincial Assembly, which sits daily for two or three weeks and discusses the economic wants of the province. During this time a good many landed proprietors, who habitually live on their estates or in St. Petersburg, collect in the town, and enliven a little the ordinary society. But as Christmas approaches the deputies disperse, and again the town becomes enshrouded in that "eternal stillness" (vétchnaya tishiná) which a native poet has declared to be the essential characteristic of Russian provincial life.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE IMPERIAL ADMINISTRATION AND THE OFFICIALS.

The Officials in Novgorod, with the exception of the Vice-Governor, assist me in my Studies—The Modern Imperial Administration created by Peter the Great, and developed by his Successors—A Slavophil's View of the Administration—The Administration briefly described—The Tchinovniks, or Officials—Official Titles and their real Significance—What the Administration has done for Russia in the Past—Its Character determined by the peculiar relation between the Government and the People—Its Radical Vices—Bureaucratic Remedies—Complicated Formal Procedure—The Gendarmerie: my Personal Relations with this Branch of the Administration; Arrest and Release—A strong, healthy Public Opinion the only effectual Remedy for Bad Administration; this Principle recently exemplified in Russia.

One of my reasons, as I have said, for taking up my winter quarters in Novgorod was that I might there study the provincial administration; and as soon as a convenient opportunity presented itself I communicated my intention to the Governor and Vice-Governor. Both of these gentlemen, as well as some of the other officials, at once promised to afford me all the assistance in their power, and I accordingly congratulated myself on the choice I had made, but my first attempt to take advantage of the promises thus given diminished considerably my sanguine expectations. When I called one evening on the Vice-Governor, and reminded him of his friendly offers, I found that he had in the meantime, like the merchant of whom I spoke in a former chapter, changed his mind. Instead of answering my first simple inquiry, he stared at me fixedly, as if for the purpose of

detecting some covert, malicious design, and then, putting on an air of official dignity, informed me that, as I had not been authorised by the Minister to make these investigations, he could not assist me, and would certainly not allow me to examine the archives.

This was not encouraging, but it did not prevent me from applying to the Governor and the other officials, and I found to my delight that they had no scruples about rendering me assistance. The Governor willingly explained to me the mechanism of provincial administration, and indicated to me the works in which I could find the theoretical and historical information which I required; and the minor officials initiated me into the mysteries of their respective departments. At last the Vice-Governor himself followed the example of his colleagues, but I politely declined his services. The elementary information thus acquired I had afterwards abundant opportunities of completing by observation and study, and I now propose to communicate to the reader a few of the more general results which I have obtained.

The gigantic administrative machine which holds together all the various parts of the vast Empire, and secures for all of them a certain amount of public order and tranquillity, has been gradually created by successive generations, but we may say roughly that it was first designed and constructed by Peter the Great. Before his time the country was governed in a rude, primitive fashion. The Grand Princes of Moscow, in subduing their rivals and annexing the surrounding principalities, merely cleared the ground for a great homogeneous State, and

made no attempt to build a symmetrical political edifice. Wily, practical politicians, rather than statesmen of the doctrinaire type, they never dreamed of introducing uniformity and symmetry into the administration. They spared and developed the ancient institutions, so far as these were useful and consistent with the exercise of autocratic power, and made only such alterations as practical necessity demanded. And these necessary alterations were more frequently local than general. Special decisions, instruction to particular officials, and charters for particular communes or proprietors, were much more common than general legislative measures. In short, the old Muscovite Tsars practised a tentative, hand-to-mouth policy, ruthlessly destroying whatever caused temporary inconvenience, and giving little heed to what did not force itself upon their attention. Hence, under their rule the administration presented not only territorial peculiarities, but also an ill-assorted combination of different systems in the same district—a conglomeration of institutions belonging to different epochs, like a fleet composed of triremes, three-deckers, and ironclads.

This irregular system, or rather want of system, seemed highly unsatisfactory to the logical mind of Peter the Great, who was all his life a thorough doctrinaire. He conceived the grand design of sweeping it away, and putting in its place a symmetrical bureaucratic machine, constructed according to the newest principles of political science. It is scarcely necessary to say that this magnificent project, so foreign to the traditional

ideas and customs of the people, was not easily realised. Imagine a man, without technical knowledge, without skilled workmen, without good tools, and with no better material than soft, crumbling sandstone, endeavouring to build a palace on a marsh! The undertaking would seem to reasonable minds utterly absurd, and yet it must be admitted that Peter's project was scarcely more feasible. He had neither technical knowledge, nor the requisite materials, nor a firm foundation to build on. With his usual Titanic energy he demolished the old structure, but his attempts to construct were little more than a series of failures. In his numerous ukazes he has left us a graphic description of his efforts, and it is at once instructive and saddening to watch the great worker toiling indefatigably at his self-imposed task. His instruments are constantly breaking in his hands. The foundations of the building are continually giving way, and the lower tiers crumbling under the superincumbent weight. A whole section is found to be unsuitable, and is ruthlessly pulled down, or falls of its own accord. And yet the builder toils on, with a perseverance and energy of purpose that compel admiration, frankly confessing his mistakes and failures, and patiently seeking the means of remedying them, never allowing a word of despondency to escape him, and never despairing of ultimate success. And at length death comes, and the mighty builder is snatched away suddenly in the midst of his unfinished labours, bequeathing to his successors the task of carrying on the great work.

None of these successors possessed Peter's genius and energy, but they were all compelled by the force of circumstances to adopt his plans. A return to the old rough and ready rule of the Voyevods was impossible. As the autocratic power became more and more imbued with Western ideas, it felt more and more the need of a thoroughly good instrument for the realisation of its policy, and accordingly strove to systematise and centralise the administration.

In this change we may perceive a certain analogy with the history of the French administration from the time of Philippe le Bel to that of Louis XIV. In both countries we see the central power bringing the local administrative organs more and more under its control, till at last it succeeds in creating a thoroughly centralised bureaucratic organisation. But under this superficial resemblance lie profound differences. The French kings had to struggle with provincial sovereignties and feudal rights, and when they had annihilated this opposition, they easily found materials with which to build up the bureaucratic structure. The Russian sovereigns, on the contrary, met with no such opposition, but they had great difficulty in finding bureaucratic material amongst their uneducated, undisciplined subjects. For many generations schools and colleges in Russia were founded and maintained simply for the purpose of preparing men for the public service.

The administration was thus brought much nearer to the West-European ideal, but some people have grave doubts as to whether it became thereby better adapted to

the practical wants of the people for whom it was created. On this point, a well-known Slavophil once made to me some remarks which are worthy of being recorded. "You have observed," he said, "that till very recently there was in Russia an enormous amount of official peculation, extortion, and misgovernment of every kind, that the courts of law were dens of iniquity, that the people often committed perjury, and much more of the same sort, and it must be admitted that all this has not yet entirely disappeared. But what does it prove? That the Russian people are morally inferior to the German? Not at all. It simply proves that the German system of administration, which was forced upon them without their consent, was utterly unsuited to their nature. If a young growing boy be compelled to wear very tight boots, he will probably burst them, and the ugly rents will doubtless produce an unfavourable impression on the passers-by; but surely it is better that the boots should burst than that the feet should be deformed. Now the Russian people was compelled to put on not only tight boots, but also a tight jacket, and, being young and vigorous, it burst them. Narrow-minded, pedantic Germans can neither understand nor provide for the wants of the broad Slavonic nature."

In its present form the Russian administration seems at first sight a very imposing edifice. At the top of the pyramid stands the Emperor, "the autocratic monarch," as Peter the Great described him, "who has to give an account of his acts to no one on earth, but has a power and authority to rule his states and lands

as a Christian sovereign according to his own will and judgment." Immediately below the Emperor we see the Council of State, the Committee of Ministers, and the Senate, which represent respectively the legislative, the administrative, and the judicial power. An Englishman glancing over the first volume of the Code might imagine that the Council of State is a kind of parliament, and the Committee of Ministers a ministry in our sense of the term, but in reality both institutions are simply incarnations of the autocratic power. Though the Council is entrusted by law with many important functions—such as examining and criticising the annual budget, declaring war, concluding peace, and performing other important duties—it has merely a consultative character, and the Emperor is not in any way bound by its decisions. The Committee is not at all a ministry as we understand the word. The ministers are all directly and individually responsible to the Emperor, and therefore the Committee has no common responsibility or other cohesive force. As to the Senate, it has descended from its high estate. It was originally entrusted with the supreme power during the absence or minority of the monarch, and was intended to exercise a controlling influence in all sections of the administration, but now its activity is restricted to judicial matters, and it is little more than a supreme court of appeal.

Immediately below these three institutions stand the Ministries,* ten in number. They are the central

* The ten sections of the administration are—(1) the Interior, (2) Public Works, (3) State Demesnes, (4) Finance, (5) Justice, (6) Public Instruction, (7) War, (8) Navy, (9) Foreign Affairs, (10) the Imperial Court.

points, in which converge the various kinds of territorial administration, and from which radiates the Imperial will all over the Empire.

For the purposes of territorial administration Russia Proper—that is to say, European Russia, exclusive of Poland, the Baltic Provinces, Finland, and the Caucasus, each of which has a peculiar administration of its own* —is divided into forty-six provinces, or "Governments" (*gubernii*), and each Government is subdivided into Districts (*uyezdi*). The average area of a province is about the size of Portugal, but some are as small as Belgium, whilst one at least is twenty-five times as big. The population, however, does not correspond to the amount of territory. In the largest province, that of Archangel, there are less than 300,000 inhabitants, whilst in some of the smaller ones there are over two millions. The districts likewise vary greatly in size. Some are smaller than Oxfordshire or Buckingham, and others are much bigger than the whole of the United Kingdom.

Over each province is placed a Governor, who is assisted in his duties by a Vice-Governor and a small council. According to the legislation of Catherine II., which still appears in the Code and has only been partially repealed, the Governor is termed "the steward of the province," and is entrusted with so many and such delicate duties, that in order to obtain men qualified for the post, it would be necessary to realise the great Empress's design of creating, by education, "a new race

* The peculiarities of administration in Poland are being rapidly abolished.

of people." Down to very recent times the Governors understood the term "stewards" in a very literal sense, and ruled in a most arbitrary, high-handed style, often exercising an important influence on the civil and criminal tribunals. These extensive and vaguely-defined powers have now been very much curtailed, partly by positive legislation, and partly by increased publicity and improved means of communication. All judicial matters have been placed completely beyond the Governor's control, and many of his former functions are now fulfilled by the Zemstvo—the new organ of local self-government, of which I shall have more to say presently. Besides this, all ordinary current affairs are regulated by an already big and ever-growing body of instructions, in the form of Imperial orders and ministerial circulars, and as soon as anything not provided for by the instructions happens to occur, the minister is consulted through the post-office or by telegraph. Even within the sphere of their lawful authority the Governors have now a certain respect for public opinion, and occasionally a very wholesome dread of casual newspaper correspondents. Thus the men who were formerly described by the satirists as "little satraps," have sunk to the level of very subordinate officials. I can confidently say that many (I believe the majority) of them are honest, upright men, who are perhaps not endowed with any unusual administrative capacities, but who perform their duties faithfully according to their lights. Certainly, M. Lerche, who was Governor of Novgorod during my sojourn there, was a most honourable, con-

scientious, and intelligent man, who had gained golden opinions from all classes of the people. If any representatives of the old "satraps" still exist, they must be sought for in the outlying Asiatic provinces.

Independent of the Governor, who is the local representative of the Ministry of the Interior, are a number of resident officials, who represent the other ministries, and each of them has a bureau, with the requisite number of assistants, secretaries, and scribes.

To keep this vast and complex bureaucratic machine in motion it is necessary to have a large and well-drilled army of officials. These are drawn chiefly from the ranks of the noblesse and the clergy, and form a peculiar social class called Tchinovniks, or men with "Tchins." As the Tchin plays an important part in Russia, not only in the official world, but also to some extent in social life, it may be well to explain its significance.

All offices, civil and military, are, according to a scheme invented by Peter the Great, arranged in fourteen classes or ranks, and to each class or rank a particular name is attached. As promotion is supposed to be given according to personal merit, a man who enters the public service for the first time must, whatever be his social position, begin in the lower ranks, and work his way upwards. Educational certificates may exempt him from the necessity of passing through the lowest classes, and the Imperial will may disregard the restrictions laid down by law, but as a general rule a man must begin at or near the bottom of the official ladder, and he must remain on each step a certain specified time. The step

on which he is for the moment standing, or, in other words, the official rank or Tchin which he possesses, determines what offices he is competent to hold. Thus rank or Tchin is a necessary condition for receiving an appointment, but it does not designate any actual office, and the names of the different ranks are extremely apt to mislead a foreigner.

We must always bear this in mind when we meet with those imposing titles which Russian tourists sometimes put on their visiting-cards, such as "Conseiller de Cour," "Conseiller d'État," "Conseiller privé de S.M. l'Empereur de toutes les Russies." It would be uncharitable to suppose that these titles are used with the intention of misleading, but that they do sometimes mislead there cannot be the least doubt. I shall never forget the look of intense disgust which I once saw on the face of an American who had invited to dinner a "Conseiller de Cour," on the assumption that he would have a court dignitary as his guest, and who casually discovered that the personage in question was simply an insignificant official in one of the public offices. No doubt other people have had similar experiences. The unwary foreigner who has heard that there is in Russia a very important institution called the "Conseil d'État," naturally supposes that a "Conseiller d'État" is a member of that venerable body; and if he meets "Son Excellence le Conseiller privé," he is pretty sure to assume—especially if the word "actuel" has been affixed—that he sees a real living member of the Russian Privy Council. When to the title is added, "de S.M.

l'Empereur de toutes les Russies," a boundless field is opened up to the non-Russian imagination. In reality these titles are not nearly so important as they seem. The *soi-disant* "Conseiller de Cour" has probably nothing to do with the court. The Conseiller d'État is so far from being a member of the Conseil d'État that he cannot possibly become a member till he receives a higher Tchin.* As to the Privy Councillor, it is sufficient to say that the Privy Council, which had a very odious reputation in its lifetime, died more than a century ago, and has not since been resuscitated. The explanation of these anomalies is to be found in the fact that the Russian Tchins, like the German honorary titles—Hofrath, Staatsrath, Geheimrath—of which they are a literal translation, indicate not actual office, but simply official rank. Formerly the appointment to an office generally depended on the Tchin; now there is a tendency to reverse the old order of things and make the Tchin depend upon the office actually held.

The reader of practical mind who is in the habit of considering results rather than forms and formalities desires probably no further description of the Russian bureaucracy, but wishes to know simply how it works in practice. What has it done for Russia in the past, and what is it doing in the present?

At the present day, when faith in despotic civilisers and paternal government has been rudely shaken, and the advantages of a free, spontaneous national develop-

* In Russian the two words are quite different; the Council is called *Gosudarstvenny* Sovêt, and the title *Statski* Sovêtnik.

ment are fully recognised, centralised bureaucracies have everywhere fallen into bad odour. In Russia the dislike to them is particularly strong, because it has there something more than a purely theoretical basis. The recollection of the reign of Nicholas, with its stern military régime, and minute, pedantic formalism, makes many Russians condemn in no measured terms the administration under which they live, and most Englishmen will feel inclined to endorse this condemnation. Before passing sentence, however, we ought to know that the system has at least an historical justification, and we must not allow our love of constitutional liberty and local self-government to blind us to the distinction between theoretical and historical possibility. What seems to political philosophers abstractly the best possible government may be utterly inapplicable in certain concrete cases. We need not attempt to decide whether it is better for humanity that Russia should exist as a nation, but we may boldly assert that without a strongly centralised administration Russia would never have become one of the great European powers. Until comparatively recent times the part of the world which is known as the Russian Empire was a conglomeration of independent or semi-independent political units, animated with centrifugal as well as centripetal forces; and even at the present day it is far from being a compact homogeneous State. In many respects it resembles our Indian Empire more closely than a European country, and we all know what India would become if the strong cohesive power of the administration were withdrawn. It was

the autocratic power, with the centralised administration as its necessary complement, that first created Russia, then saved her from dismemberment and political annihilation, and ultimately secured for her a place among European nations by introducing Western civilisation. Theoretically it would have been better that the various units should have united spontaneously, and that European civilisation should have been voluntarily adopted by all classes of the inhabitants, but historically such a phenomenon was impossible.

Whilst thus recognising clearly that autocracy and a strongly centralised administration were necessary first for the creation and afterwards for the preservation of national independence, we must not shut our eyes to the evil consequences which resulted from this unfortunate necessity. It was in the nature of things that the Government, aiming at the realisation of designs which its subjects neither sympathised with nor clearly understood, should have become separated from the nation; and the reckless haste and violence with which it attempted to carry out its schemes aroused a spirit of positive opposition among the people. A considerable section of the people long looked on the reforming Tsars as incarnations of the spirit of evil, and the Tsars in their turn looked upon the people as a passive instrument for the carrying out of their political designs. This peculiar relation between the nation and the Government has given the key-note to the whole system of administration. The Government has always treated the people as minors, utterly incapable of understanding

its political designs, and only very partially competent to look after their own local affairs.' The officials have naturally acted in the same spirit. Looking for direction and approbation merely to their superiors, they have systematically treated those over whom they were placed, as a conquered or inferior race. The State has thus come to be regarded as an abstract entity, with interests entirely different from those of the human beings composing it; and in all matters in which State interests are supposed to be involved, the rights of individuals are ruthlessly sacrificed.

If we remember that the difficulties of centralised administration are always in direct proportion to the extent and territorial variety of the country to be governed, we may readily understand how slowly and imperfectly the administrative machine necessarily works in Russia. The whole of the vast region stretching from the Polar Ocean to the Caspian, and from the shores of the Baltic to the confines of the Celestial Empire, is administered from St. Petersburg. The genuine bureaucrat has a wholesome dread of formal responsibility, and generally tries to avoid it by taking all matters out of the hands of his subordinates, and passing them on to the higher authorities. As soon, therefore, as affairs are caught up by the administrative machine they begin to ascend, and probably arrive some day at the cabinet of the minister. Thus the ministries are flooded with papers—many of the most trivial import—from all parts of the Empire; and the higher officials, even if they had the eyes of an Argus and the hands of a Briareus, could not

possibly fulfil conscientiously the duties imposed on them. In reality the Russian administrators of the higher ranks recall neither Argus nor Briareus. They commonly show neither an extensive nor a profound knowledge of the country which they are supposed to govern, and seem always to have a fair amount of leisure time at their disposal.

Besides the unavoidable evils of excessive centralisation, Russia has had to suffer much from the jobbery, venality, and extortion of the officials. When Peter the Great one day prepared to hang every man who should steal as much as would buy a rope, his Procurator-General frankly replied that if his Majesty put his project into execution there would be no officials left. "We all steal," added the worthy official; "the only difference is that some of us steal larger amounts and more openly than others." Since these words were spoken more than a century and a half has passed, and during all that time Russia has steadily made progress in many respects, but until the commencement of the present reign little change took place in the moral character of the administration. The elder half of the present generation can still remember the time when they could have repeated, without much exaggeration, the confession of Peter's Procurator-General.

To appreciate aright this ugly phenomenon we must distinguish two kinds of venality. On the one hand there was the habit of exacting what are vulgarly termed "tips" for services performed, and on the other there were the various kinds of positive dishonesty.

Though it might not be always easy to draw a clear line between the two categories, the distinction was fully recognised in the moral consciousness of the time, and many an official who received regularly "sinless revenues" (*bezgreshniye dokhodi*), as the tips were sometimes called, would have been very indignant had he been stigmatised as a dishonest man. The practice was, in fact, universal, and could be, to a certain extent, justified by the smallness of the official salaries. In some departments there was a recognised tariff. The "brandy farmers," for example, paid regularly a fixed sum to every official, from the governor to the policeman, according to his rank. I know of one case where an official, on receiving a larger sum than was customary, conscientiously handed back the change! The other and more heinous offences were by no means so common, but were still fearfully frequent. Many high officials and important dignitaries were known to receive large revenues, to which the term "sinless" could not by any means be applied, and yet they retained their position, and were received in society with respectful deference. That undeniable fact speaks volumes for the moral atmosphere of the official world at that time.

The sovereigns were always perfectly aware of the abuses, and all strove more or less to root them out, but the success which attended their efforts does not give us a very exalted idea of the practical omnipotence of autocracy. In a centralised bureaucratic administration, in which each official is to a certain extent responsible for the sins of his subordinates, it is always

extremely difficult to bring an official culprit to justice, for he is sure to be protected by his superiors; and when the superiors are themselves habitually guilty of malpractices, the culprit is quite safe from exposure and punishment. The Tsar, indeed, might do much towards exposing and punishing offenders, if he could venture to call in public opinion to his assistance, but in reality he is very apt to become a party to the system of hushing up official delinquencies. He is himself the first official in the realm, and he knows that the abuse of power by a subordinate has a tendency to produce hostility towards the fountain of all official power. Frequent punishment of officials might, it is thought, diminish public respect for the Government, and undermine that social discipline which is necessary for the public tranquillity. It is therefore considered expedient to give to official delinquencies as little publicity as possible. Besides this, strange as it may seem, a Government which rests on the arbitrary will of a single individual is, notwithstanding occasional outbursts of severity, much less systematically and invariably severe than authority founded on free public opinion. When delinquencies occur in very high places the Tsar is almost sure to display a leniency approaching to tenderness. If it be necessary to make a sacrifice to justice, the sacrificial operation is likely to be made as painless as may be, and illustrious scapegoats are not allowed to die of starvation in the wilderness—the wilderness being generally Paris or Baden-Baden. This fact may seem strange to those who are in the habit of associating

autocracy with Neapolitan dungeons and the mines of Siberia, but it is not difficult to explain. No individual, even though he should be the Autocrat of all the Russias, can so case himself in the armour of official dignity as to be completely proof against personal influences. The severity of autocrats is reserved for political offenders, against whom they naturally harbour a feeling of personal resentment. It is so much easier for us to be lenient and charitable towards a man who sins against public morality, than towards one who sins against our own interests!

In justice to the bureaucratic reformers in Russia, it must be said that they have preferred prevention to cure. Refraining from all Draconian legislation, they have put their faith in a system of ingenious checks and a complicated formal procedure. When we examine the complicated formalities and labyrinthine procedure by which the administration is controlled, our first impression is that administrative abuses must be almost impossible. Every possible act of every official seems to have been foreseen, and every possible outlet from the narrow path of honesty seems to have been carefully walled up. As the English reader has probably no conception of formal procedure in a highly centralised bureaucracy, let me give an instance by way of illustration.

In the residence of a Governor-General one of the stoves is in need of repairs. An ordinary mortal may assume that a man with the rank of Governor-General may be trusted to expend a few shillings conscientiously, and that consequently his Excellency will at once order

the repairs to be made and the payment to be put down among the petty expenses. To the bureaucratic mind the case appears in a very different light. All possible contingencies must be carefully provided for. As a Governor-General may possibly be possessed with a mania for making useless alterations, the necessity of the repairs ought to be verified; and as wisdom and honesty are more likely to reside in an assembly than in an individual, it is well to entrust the verification to a council. A council of three or four members accordingly certifies that the repairs are necessary. This is pretty strong authority, but it is not enough. Councils are composed of mere human beings, liable to error and subject to be intimidated by the Governor-General. It is prudent, therefore, to demand that the decision of the council be confirmed by the Procureur, who is directly subordinated to the Minister of Justice. When this double confirmation has been obtained, an architect examines the stove, and makes an estimate. But it would be dangerous to give *carte blanche* to an architect, and therefore the estimate has to be confirmed, first by the aforesaid council and afterwards by the Procureur. When all these formalities—which require sixteen days and ten sheets of paper—have been duly observed, his Excellency is informed that the contemplated repairs will cost two roubles and forty kopeks, or about five shillings of our money. Even here the formalities do not stop, for the Government must have the assurance that the architect who made the estimate and superintended the repairs has not been guilty of negligence. A second archi-

tect is therefore sent to examine the work, and his report, like the estimate, requires to be confirmed by the council and the Procureur. The whole correspondence lasts thirty days, and requires no less than thirty sheets of paper! Had the person who desired the repairs been not a Governor-General but an ordinary mortal, it is impossible to say how long the procedure might have lasted.

It might naturally be supposed that this circuitous and complicated method, with its registers, ledgers, and minutes of proceeding, must at least prevent pilfering; but this *à priori* conclusion has been emphatically belied by experience. Every new ingenious device had merely the effect of producing a still more ingenious means of avoiding it. The system did not restrain those who wished to pilfer, and it had a deleterious effect on honest officials, by making them feel that the Government reposed no confidence in them. Besides this, it produced among all officials, honest and dishonest alike, the habit of systematic falsification. As it was impossible for even the most pedantic of men—and pedantry, be it remarked, is a rare quality among Russians—to fulfil conscientiously all the prescribed formalities, it became customary to observe the forms merely on paper. Officials certified facts which they never dreamed of examining, and secretaries gravely wrote the minutes of meetings that had never been held! Thus, in the case above cited, the repairs were in reality begun and ended long before the architect was officially authorised to begin the work. The comedy was nevertheless gravely played out to the

end, so that any one afterwards revising the documents would have found that everything had been done in perfect order.

Perhaps the most ingenious means for preventing administrative abuses was devised by the Emperor Nicholas. Fully aware that he was regularly and systematically deceived by the ordinary officials, he formed a body of well-paid officers, called the "Gendarmerie," who were scattered over the country, and ordered to report directly to his Majesty whatever seemed to them worthy of attention. Bureaucratic minds considered this an admirable expedient; and the Tsar confidently expected that he would, by means of these official observers who had no interest in concealing the truth, be able to know everything, and to correct all official abuses. In reality the institution produced few good results, and in some respects had a very pernicious influence. Though picked men and provided with good salaries, these officers were all more or less permeated with the prevailing spirit. They could not but feel that they were regarded as spies and informers—a humiliating conviction, little calculated to develop that feeling of self-respect which is the main foundation of uprightness—and that all their efforts could do but little good. They were, in fact, in pretty much the same position as Peter's Procurator-General, and, with that *bonhomie* which is a prominent trait of the Russian character, they disliked ruining individuals who were no worse than the majority of their fellows. Besides this, according to the received code of official morality, insubordination was a more

heinous sin than dishonesty, and political offences were regarded as the blackest of all. The Gendarmerie shut their eyes, therefore, to the prevailing abuses, which were believed to be incurable, and directed their attention to real or imaginary political delinquencies. Oppression and extortion remained unnoticed, whilst an incautious word or a foolish joke at the expense of the Government was too often magnified into an act of high treason.

This force still exists, and has at least one representative in every important town. It serves as a kind of supplement to the ordinary police, and is generally employed in all matters in which secrecy is required. Unfortunately it is not bound by those legal restrictions which protect the public against the arbitrary will of the ordinary authorities. It has a vaguely-defined roving commission, to watch and arrest all persons who seem to it in any way dangerous or *suspectes*, and it may keep such in confinement for an indefinite time, or remove them to some distant and inhospitable part of the Empire, without making them undergo a regular trial. It is, in short, the ordinary instrument for punishing political dreamers, suppressing secret societies, counteracting political agitations, and in general executing the extra-legal orders of the Government.

My relations with this anomalous branch of the administration were somewhat peculiar. After my experience with the Vice-Governor of Novgorod I determined to place myself above suspicion, and accordingly applied to the "Chef des Gendarmes," for some kind of official document which would prove to

all officials with whom I might come in contact that I had no illicit designs. My request was granted, and I was furnished with the necessary documents; but I soon found that in seeking to avoid Scylla I had fallen into Charybdis. In calming official suspicions I inadvertently aroused suspicions of another kind. The documents proving that I enjoyed the protection of the Government made many people suspect that I was an emissary of the gendarmerie, and greatly impeded me in my efforts to collect information from private sources. As the private were for me more important than the official sources of information, I refrained from asking for a renewal of the protection, and wandered about the country as an ordinary unprotected traveller. For some time I had no cause to regret this decision. I had reason to believe that I was pretty closely watched, and that my letters were sometimes opened at the post-office, but I was subjected to no further inconvenience. At last, however, when I had nearly forgotten all about Scylla and Charybdis, I one night unexpectedly ran upon the former, and, to my astonishment, found myself formally arrested! The incident happened in this wise.

In the summer of 1872 I had occasion to visit Austria and Servia, and after a short absence, returned to Russia through Moldavia. On arriving at the Pruth, which there forms the frontier, I found an officer of gendarmerie, whose duty it was to examine the passports of all passers-by. Though my passport was completely *en règle*, having been duly *visé* by the British and

Russian Consuls at Galatz, this gentleman subjected me to a searching examination regarding my past life, actual occupation, and intentions for the future. On learning that I had been for more than two years travelling in Russia at my own expense, for the simple purpose of collecting miscellaneous information, he looked a little incredulous, and seemed to have some doubts as to my being a genuine British subject; but when my statements were confirmed by my travelling companion, a Russian friend who carried awe-inspiring credentials, he countersigned my passport, and allowed us to depart. The inspection of our luggage by the custom-house officers was soon got over; and as we drove off to the neighbouring village, where we were to spend the night, we congratulated ourselves on having escaped for some time from all contact with the official world. In this we were "reckoning without the host." As the clock struck twelve that night I was roused by a loud knocking at my door, and after a good deal of parley, during which some one proposed to effect an entrance by force, I drew the bolt. The officer who had signed my passport entered, and said, in a stiff, official tone, "I must request you to remain here for twenty-four hours."

Not a little astonished by this announcement, I ventured to inquire the reason for this strange request.

"That is my business," was the laconic reply.

"Perhaps it is; still you must, on mature consideration, admit that I too have some interest in the matter. To my extreme regret I cannot comply with your request, and must leave at sunrise."

"You shall not leave. Give me your passport."

"Unless detained by force, I shall start at four o'clock; and as I wish to get some sleep before that time I must request you instantly to retire. You had the right to stop me at the frontier, but you have no right to come and disturb me in this fashion, and I shall certainly report you. My passport I shall give to none but a regular officer of police."

Here followed a long discussion on the rights, privileges, and general character of the gendarmerie, during which my opponent gradually laid aside his dictatorial tone, and endeavoured to convince me that the honourable body to which he belonged was merely an ordinary branch of the administration. Though evidently irritated, he never, I must say, overstepped the bounds of politeness, and seemed only half convinced that he was justified in interfering with my movements. When he found that he could not induce me to give up my passport he withdrew, and I again lay down to rest, but in about half an hour I was again disturbed. This time an officer of regular police entered, and demanded my "papers." To my inquiries as to the reason of all this disturbance, he replied, in a very polite, apologetic way, that he knew nothing about the reason, but he had received orders to arrest me, and must obey. To him I delivered my passport, on condition that I should receive a written receipt, and should be allowed to telegraph to the British ambassador in St. Petersburg.

Early next morning I telegraphed to the ambassador, and waited impatiently all day for a reply. I was

allowed to walk about the village and the immediate vicinity, but of this permission I did not make much use. The village population was entirely Jewish, and Jews in that part of the world have a wonderful capacity for spreading intelligence. By the early morning there was probably not a man, woman, or child in the place who had not heard of my arrest, and many of them felt a not unnatural curiosity to see the malefactor who had been caught by the police. To be stared at as a malefactor is not very agreeable, so I preferred to remain in my room, where, in the company of my friend, who kindly remained with me and made small jokes about the boasted liberty of British subjects, I spent the time pleasantly enough. The most disagreeable part of the affair was the uncertainty as to how many days, weeks, or months I might be detained, and on this point the police-officer would not even hazard a conjecture.

The detention came to an end sooner than I expected. On the following day—that is to say, about thirty-six hours after the nocturnal visit—the police-officer brought me my passport, and at the same time a telegram from the Embassy informed me that the central authorities had ordered my release. On my afterwards pertinaciously requesting an explanation of the unceremonious treatment to which I had been subjected, the Minister for Foreign Affairs explained that the authorities expected a person of my name to cross the frontier about that time with a quantity of false bank-notes, and that I had been arrested by mistake. I must confess that this explanation, though official, seemed to me more ingenious

than satisfactory, but I was obliged to accept it, and I had never afterwards any similar cause for complaint.

From all I have seen and heard of the gendarmerie I am disposed to believe that the officers are for the most part polite, well-educated men, who seek to fulfil their disagreeable duties in as inoffensive a way as possible. It must, however, be admitted that they are generally regarded with suspicion and dislike, even by those timid people who fear the foolish attempts at revolutionary propaganda which it is the special duty of the gendarmerie to discover and suppress. Nor need this surprise us. Though very many people believe in the necessity of capital punishment, there are very few who do not feel a decided aversion to the public executioner.

To return from this digression. Neither the gendarmerie nor the ingenious formal procedure materially diminished the venality, dishonesty, and other vices of the officials. The attempt to remedy these evils by means of decentralisation and popular election proved equally unsuccessful. From the time of Catherine II. down to the commencement of the present reign the rural police and the judges of each province and district were elected by the local inhabitants, and the history of these institutions, which were, if possible, worse than the Imperial administration, forms an ugly, inconvenient episode for those who believe in the magical efficacy of local self-government under all circumstances.

The only effectual remedy for administrative abuses lies in placing the administration under public control. This has been abundantly proved in Russia. All the

efforts of the Tsars during many generations to check the evil by means of ingenious bureaucratic devices proved utterly fruitless. Even the iron will and gigantic energy of Nicholas were insufficient for the task. But when, after the Crimean War, there was a great moral awakening and the Tsar called the people to his assistance, the stubborn, deep-rooted evils immediately disappeared. For a time venality and extortion were unknown, and since that period they have never been able to regain their old force.

At the present moment it cannot be said that the administration is immaculate, but it is incomparably purer than at any former period of its history.* Though public opinion is no longer so powerful as it was a few years ago, it is still strong enough to repress many malpractices which in the time of Nicholas and his predecessors were too frequent to attract attention. On this subject I shall have more to say in the sequel.

* The only officials who still enjoy a decidedly bad reputation are the engineers and the foresters.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE NEW LOCAL SELF-GOVERNMENT.

Favourable Opportunity of studying the Zemstvo—Russian self-criticism—Parliamentary form of the Zemstvo—A District Assembly—Nobles and *ci-devant* Serfs—A Provincial Assembly—The Leading Members—Character of different Zemstvos—Origin and Purpose of the Institution—Bureaucratic Lawmaking—Inordinate Expectations—What the Zemstvo has done—Its Want of Vitality explained—British and Russian Methods of creating Institutions—A Characteristic Incident—Future of the Institution.

VERY soon after my arrival in Novgorod I made the acquaintance of a gentleman, who was described to me as "the president of the provincial Zemstvo-bureau," and finding him amiable and communicative I suggested that he might give me some information regarding the institution of which he was the chief representative. With the utmost readiness he prepared to be my Mentor with regard to the Zemstvo, at once introduced me to his colleagues, and invited me to come and see him at his office as often as I felt inclined. Of this invitation I made abundant use. At first my visits were discreetly few and short, but when I found that my friend and his colleagues really wished to instruct me in all the details of Zemstvo administration, and had arranged a special table for my convenience, I became a regular attendant, and spent daily several hours in the bureau, studying the current affairs, and noting down the interesting bits of statistical and other information which came before the members, as if I had been one of their number.

When they went to inspect the hospital, the lunatic asylum, the seminary for the preparation of village schoolmasters, or any other Zemstvo institution, they invariably invited me to accompany them, and made no attempt to conceal from me the defects which they happened to discover.

I mention these facts because they illustrate well the extreme readiness of the Russians to afford every possible facility to a foreigner who wishes seriously to study their country. They believe that they have long been misunderstood and systematically calumniated by foreigners, and they are extremely desirous that all misconceptions regarding their country should be removed. It must be said to their honour that they have little or none of that false patriotism which seeks to conceal national defects; and in judging themselves and their institutions they are inclined to be over-severe rather than unduly lenient. In the time of Nicholas those who desired to stand well with the Government proclaimed loudly that they lived in the happiest and best governed country of the world, but this shallow official optimism has long since gone out of fashion. During the six years which I spent in Russia I found everywhere the utmost readiness to assist me in my investigations, and very rarely noticed that habit of "throwing dust in the eyes of foreigners," of which some writers have spoken so much.

The Zemstvo is a kind of local administration which supplements the action of the rural communes, and takes cognisance of those higher public wants which

individual communes cannot possibly satisfy. Its principal duties are to keep the roads and bridges in proper repair, to provide means of conveyance for the rural police and other officials, to elect the justices of peace, to look after primary education and sanitary affairs, to watch the state of the crops and take measures against approaching famine, and in short to undertake, within certain clearly-defined limits, whatever seems likely to increase the material and moral well-being of the population. In form the institution is parliamentary—that is to say, it consists of an assembly of deputies which meets at least once a year, and of a permanent executive bureau elected by the assembly from among its members. If the assembly be regarded as a local parliament, the bureau corresponds to the ministry. In accordance with this analogy my friend the president was sometimes jocularly termed the prime minister. Once every three years the deputies are elected in certain fixed proportions by the landed proprietors, the rural communes, and the municipal corporations. Every province (*guberniya*) and each of the districts (*uyezdi*) into which the province is subdivided has such an assembly and such a bureau.

Not long after my arrival in Novgorod I had the opportunity of being present at a District Assembly. In the ball-room of the "Club de la Noblesse" I found thirty or forty men seated round a long table covered with green cloth. Before each member lay sheets of paper for the purpose of taking notes, and before the president—the Marshal of Noblesse for the district—

stood a small hand-bell, which he rang vigorously at the commencement of the proceedings and on all occasions when he wished to obtain silence. To the right and left of the president sat the members of the executive bureau (*uprava*), armed with piles of written and printed documents, from which they read long and tedious extracts, till the majority of the audience took to yawning and one or two of the members positively went to sleep. At the close of each of these reports the president rang his bell—presumably for the purpose of awakening the sleepers—and inquired whether any one had remarks to make on what had just been read. Generally some one had remarks to make, and not unfrequently a discussion ensued. When any decided difference of opinion appeared, a vote was taken by handing round a sheet of paper, or by the simpler method of requesting the Ayes to stand up and the Noes to sit still.

What surprised me most in this assembly was that it was composed partly of nobles and partly of peasants—the latter being decidedly in the majority—and that no trace of antagonism seemed to exist between the two classes. Landed proprietors and their *ci-devant* serfs evidently met for the moment on a footing of equality. The discussions were always carried on by the nobles, but on more than one occasion peasant members rose to speak, and their remarks, always clear, practical, and to the point, were invariably listened to with respectful attention by all present. Instead of that violent antagonism which might have been expected considering the constitution of the assembly, there was a great deal too much

unanimity—a fact indicating plainly that the majority of the members did not take a very deep interest in the matters presented to them.

This assembly was held in the month of September. At the beginning of December the Assembly for the Province met, and during nearly three weeks I was daily present at its deliberations. In general character and mode of procedure it resembled closely the District Assembly. Its chief peculiarities were that its members were chosen, not by the primary electors, but by the assemblies of the ten Districts which compose the Province, and that it took cognisance merely of those matters which concerned more than one District. Besides this, the peasant deputies were very few in number—a fact which somewhat surprised me, because I was aware that, according to the law, the peasant members of the District Assemblies were eligible, like those of the other classes. The explanation is that the District Assemblies choose their most active members to represent them in the Provincial Assemblies, and consequently the choice generally falls on landed proprietors. To this arrangement the peasants make no objection, for attendance at the Provincial Assemblies demands a considerable pecuniary outlay, and payment to the deputies is expressly prohibited by law.

To give the reader an idea of the elements composing this assembly, let me introduce him to a few of the members. A considerable section of them may be described in a single sentence. They are commonplace men, who have spent part of their youth in the public

service as officers in the army, or officials in the civil administration, and have since retired to their estates, where they gain a modest competence by farming. Some of them add to their agricultural revenues by acting as justices of the peace. A few may be described more particularly.

You see there, for instance, that fine-looking old general in uniform, with the St. George's Cross at his button-hole—an order given only for bravery in the field. That is Prince S——, a grandson of one of Russia's greatest men. He has filled high posts in the administration without ever tarnishing his name by a dishonest or dishonourable action, and has spent a great part of his life at Court without ceasing to be frank, generous, and truthful. Though he has no intimate knowledge of current affairs, and sometimes gives way a little to drowsiness, his sympathies in disputed points are always on the right side, and when he gets to his feet he always speaks in a clear soldier-like fashion.

The tall gaunt man, somewhat over middle age, who sits a little to the left is Prince W——. He, too, has an historical name, but he cherishes above all things personal independence, and has consequently always kept aloof from the Administration and the Court. The leisure thus acquired he has devoted to study, and he has produced several very valuable works on political and social science. An enthusiastic but at the same time cool-headed abolitionist at the time of the Emancipation, he has since constantly striven to ameliorate the condition of the peasantry by

advocating the spread of primary education, the establishment of rural credit associations in the villages, the preservation of the communal institutions, and numerous important reforms in the financial system. Both of these gentlemen, it is said, generously gave to their peasants more land than they were obliged to give by the Emancipation law. In the Assembly Prince W—— speaks frequently, and always commands attention; and in all important committees he is a leading member. Though a warm defender of the Zemstvo institutions, he thinks that their activity ought to be confined to a comparatively narrow field, and he thereby differs from some of his colleagues, who are ready to embark in hazardous, not to say fanciful, schemes for developing the natural resources of the province. His neighbour, Mr. P——, is one of the most able and energetic members of the assembly. He is president of the executive bureau in one of the Districts, where he has founded many primary schools, and created several rural credit associations on the model of those which bear the name of Schultze Delitsch in Germany. Mr. S——, who sits beside him, was for some years an arbitrator between the proprietors and emancipated serfs, then a member of the Provincial Executive Bureau, and is now director of a bank in St. Petersburg.

To the right and left of the president—who is Marshal of Noblesse for the province—sit the members of the bureau. The gentleman who reads the long reports is my friend "the prime minister," who began life as a cavalry officer, and after a few years of

military service retired to his estate; he is an intelligent, able administrator, and a man of considerable literary culture. His colleague, who assists him in reading the reports, is a merchant, and director of the municipal bank. His neighbour is also a merchant, and in some respects the most remarkable man in the room. Though born a serf, he is already, at middle age, an important personage in the Russian commercial world. Rumour says that he laid the foundation of his fortune by one day purchasing a copper cauldron in a village through which he was passing on his way to St. Petersburg, where he hoped to gain a little money by the sale of some calves. In the course of a few years he amassed an enormous fortune; but cautious people think that he is too fond of hazardous speculations, and prophesy that he will end life as poor as he began it.

All these men belong to what may be called the party of progress, which anxiously supports all proposals recognised as "liberal," and especially all measures likely to improve the condition of the peasantry. Their chief opponent is that little man with close-cropped, bullet-shaped head and small piercing eyes, who may be called the leader of the opposition. That gentleman opposes many of the proposed schemes, on the ground that the province is already overtaxed, and that the expenditure ought therefore to be reduced to the smallest possible figure. In the District Assembly he preaches this doctrine with considerable success, for there the peasantry form the majority, and he knows how to use that terse, homely language, interspersed

with proverbs, which has far more influence on the rustic mind than scientific principles and logical reasoning; but here, in the Provincial Assembly, his following composes only a respectable minority, and he confines himself to a policy of obstruction.

The Zemstvo of Novgorod has—or at least had at that time—the reputation of being one of the most enlightened and energetic, and I must say that in the assembly of 1870 the proceedings were conducted in a business-like, satisfactory way. The reports were carefully considered, and each article of the annual budget was submitted to minute scrutiny and criticism. In several of the provinces which I afterwards visited I found that affairs were conducted in a very different fashion: quorums were formed with extreme difficulty, and the proceedings, when they at last commenced, were treated as mere formalities and despatched as speedily as possible. The character of the assembly depends of course on the amount of interest taken in local public affairs. In some districts this interest is considerable; in others it is very near zero.

The reader may perhaps imagine that the Zemstvo has, like the rural commune, grown up slowly in the course of centuries, and is in its present form a remnant of ancient liberties, which has successfully resisted the centralising tendencies of the autocratic power. In reality it is nothing of the sort. It is a modern institution, created by the autocratic power about ten years ago, and represents the most recent attempt to lighten the duties and correct the abuses

of the Imperial administration by means of local self-government.

How came it, then, it may be asked, that the autocratic power, which is believed to have a superstitious dread of parliamentary institutions, voluntarily created in each District and in each Province an organisation which is not only unmistakably parliamentary but extremely democratic? With the view of explaining this curious anomaly I must endeavour to initiate the reader into the mysteries of Russian bureaucratic law-making.

When a minister considers that some institution belonging to his branch of the service requires to be reformed, he presents to the Emperor a formal explanatory report on the subject. If his Majesty adopts the suggestion he orders a commission to be appointed for the purpose of considering the question and forming a definite project. The commission meets, and sets to work in what seems a very thorough way. It first studies the history of the institution in Russia from the earliest times downwards—or rather it listens to an essay on the subject, specially prepared for the occasion by some official who has a taste for historical studies, and can write a pleasant style. The next step—to use a phrase which often occurs in the minutes of such commissions—consists in "shedding the light of science on the question" (*prolit' na dyelo svet nauki*). This important operation consists in preparing a memorial, containing the history of similar institutions in foreign countries, and an elaborate exposition of numerous

theories held by French and German philosophical jurists. In these memorials it is often considered necessary to include every European country except Turkey, and sometimes the small German states and principal Swiss cantons are treated separately.

To illustrate the character of these wonderful productions, let me give an example. From a pile of such papers lying before me I take one almost at random. It is a memorial relating to a proposed reform of benevolent institutions. First, I find a philosophical disquisition on benevolence in general; next, some remarks on the Talmud and the Koran; then a reference to the treatment of paupers in Athens after the Peloponnesian War, and in Rome under the emperors; then some vague observations on the Middle Ages, with a quotation that was evidently intended to be Latin; lastly, comes an account of the poor-laws of modern times, in which I meet with "the Anglo-Saxon domination," King Egbert, King Ethelred; "a remarkable book of Icelandic laws, called Hragas;" Sweden and Norway, France, Holland, Belgium, Prussia, and nearly all the minor German states. The most wonderful thing is that all this mass of historical information, extending from the Talmud to the most recent legislation of Hesse-Darmstadt, is compressed into twenty-one octavo pages! The theoretical part of the memorial is not less rich. Many respected names from the literature of Germany, France, and England are forcibly dragged in; and the general conclusion drawn from this mass of raw, undigested materials is believed to be "the latest results of science."

Does the reader suspect that I have here chosen an extremely exceptional case? If so, let us take the next paper in the file. It refers to a project of law regarding imprisoment for debt. On the first page I find references to "the Salic laws of the fifth century," and the "Assises de Jerusalem, A.D. 1099." That, I think, will suffice. An experienced friend at my elbow assures me that the specimen which I have chosen is very characteristic Let us pass, then, to the next step.

When the quintessence of human wisdom and experience has thus been extracted, the commission considers how the valuable product may be applied to Russia, so as to harmonise with the existing general conditions and local peculiarities. For a man of practical mind this is, of course, the most interesting and most important part of the operation, but from Russian legislators it receives comparatively little attention. Very often have I turned to this section of official papers in order to obtain information regarding the actual state of the country, and in every case I have been grievously disappointed. Vague general phrases, founded on *à priori* reasoning rather than on observation, together with a few statistical tables—which the cautious investigator should avoid as he would an ambuscade—are too often all that is to be found. Through the thin veil of pseudo-erudition the real facts are clear enough. These philosophical legislators, who have spent all their life in the official atmosphere of St. Petersburg, know as much about Russia as the genuine cockney knows about the British Empire, and

in this part of their work they derive no assistance from the learned German books which supply an unlimited amount of historical fact and philosophical speculation.

From the commission the project passes to the Council of State, where it is examined, criticised, and perhaps modified, but it is not likely to be thereby much improved, for the members of the council are merely *ci-devant* members of commissions, hardened by a few additional years of official routine. The Council is, in fact, an assembly of officials who know little of the practical, everyday wants of the unofficial classes. No merchant, manufacturer, or farmer ever enters its sacred precincts, so that its bureaucratic serenity is never disturbed by practical objections.

The commission appointed in 1859 for the purpose of "conferring more unity and independence on the local economic administration" proceeded in a less extravagant way than the two commissions just referred to. Though some remarks were made on the earliest period of Russian history, there was no reference to the Talmud and the Koran, and no attempt to define Athenian local administration after the Peloponnesian War. Even the "Leges Barbarorum" and the "Assises de Jerusalem" were allowed to rest in peace. But the spirit which reigned in the commission was essentially bureaucratic, and the method of procedure was that which I have described. This accounts for many peculiarities of the new institutions.

The law which the commission elaborated was published in January, 1864, and produced inordinate

expectations. At that time a large section of the Russian educated classes had a simple, convenient criterion for institutions of all kinds. They assumed as a self-evident axiom that the excellence of an institution must always be in proportion to its "liberal" and democratic character. The question as to how far it might be appropriate to the existing conditions and to the character of the people, and as to whether it might not, though admirable in itself, be too expensive for the work to be performed, was little thought of. Any organisation which rested on "the elective principle," and provided an arena for free public discussion, was sure to be well received, and these conditions were fulfilled by the Zemstvo.

The expectations excited were of various kinds. People who thought more of political than economic progress saw in the new institutions the basis of boundless popular liberty. If local self-government in England had, in spite of its aristocratic character, created and preserved political liberty, as had been proved by several learned Germans, what might be expected from institutions so much more liberal and democratic? In England there have never been county parliaments, and the local administration has always been in the hands of the great landowners; whilst in Russia every district would have its elective assembly, in which the peasant would be on a level with the richest landed proprietors. People who were accustomed to think of social rather than political progress expected that the Zemstvo would soon provide the country with good roads, safe bridges, numerous village schools, well-appointed hospitals, and all the

other requisites of civilisation. Agriculture would be improved, trade and industry developed, and the condition of the peasantry ameliorated. The listless apathy of provincial life and the hereditary indifference to local public affairs were now, it was thought, about to be dispelled; and in view of this change patriotic mothers took their children to the assemblies in order to accustom them from their early years to take an interest in the public welfare.

It is scarcely necessary to say that these inordinate expectations have not been realised. The Government had no intention of conferring on the new institutions any political significance, and very soon showed that it would not allow the assemblies to exert even a moral pressure by means of petitions and political agitation. As soon as the Zemstvo of St. Petersburg gave evidence of a desire to play a political part, the assembly was at once closed by Imperial command, and several of the leading members were banished for a time from the capital.

Even within its proper sphere, as defined by law, the Zemstvo has not accomplished what was expected of it. The country has not been covered with a network of macadamised roads, and the bridges are by no means as safe as could be desired; there are still few village schools, and infirmaries are rarely to be met with. Little or nothing has been done for the development of trade or manufactures; and the villages remain very much what they were under the old administration. Meanwhile the local rates have been rising with alarming rapidity; and many people draw from all this the

conclusion that the Zemstvo is a worthless institution which has increased the taxation without conferring any corresponding benefit on the country.*

If we take as our criterion in judging the institution the exaggerated expectations at first entertained, we may feel inclined to agree with this conclusion, but this is merely tantamount to saying that the Zemstvo has performed no miracles. Russia is much poorer and much less densely populated than the more advanced nations which she takes as her model. To suppose that she could at once create for herself by means of an administrative reform all the conveniences which those more advanced nations enjoy, was as absurd as it would be to imagine that a poor man can at once construct a magnificent palace because he has received from a wealthy neighbour the necessary architectural plans. Not only years but generations must pass before Russia can assume the appearance of Germany, France, or England. The metamorphosis may be accelerated or retarded by good government, but it could not be effected at once, even if the combined wisdom of all the philosophers and statesmen in Europe were employed in legislating for the purpose.

The Zemstvo has, however, done much more than the majority of its critics suppose. In the first place, it fulfils tolerably well its ordinary everyday duties, and is very little tainted with peculation and jobbery. Secondly, it has greatly improved the condition of the hospitals,

* The sum total of the rates for thirty provinces rose in the course of three years from 5,186,302 roubles to 14,569,567 roubles.

asylums, and other benevolent institutions committed to its charge; and it has done much, considering the limited means at its disposal, for the spread of popular education by founding village schools and a few seminaries for the preparation of schoolmasters. The seminary near Novgorod I had abundant opportunities of observing, and I can speak of it and of its director, Baron Kosinski, in terms of the highest praise. In the third place, the Zemstvo has created a new and more equitable system of rating, by which the landed proprietors and owners of houses are made to bear their share of the public burdens. Last, and not least, it has created a system of mutual fire insurance for the villagers—a most valuable institution in a country like Russia, where the great majority of the peasants live in wooden houses, and fires are extremely frequent.*

Notwithstanding these important results, it must be

* In 1868 the combined revenues of the Zemstvos of thirty provinces, comprising a region more than six times as large as Great Britain and Ireland, amounted only to about two million pounds sterling. This sum was expended as follows:—

	ROUBLES.	PER CENT.
1. Houses for the police and other members of the Imperial administration	669,719	4·6
2. Quarters for the troops	118,080	0·8
3. Means of conveyance for the police and other officials	2,485,973	17·0
4. Special administration for peasant affairs	2,160,258	14·9
5. Justice of peace courts	1,925,388	13·2
6. Roads and bridges	1,906,777	13·1
7. Sanitary affairs (physicians, hospitals, &c.)	1,204,162	8·3
8. Popular education	738,859	5·1
9. Payment of debt and sundries	562,991	3·8
10. Working expenses of Zemstvo administration	2,797,360	19·2
	14,569,567	100·0

confessed that the Zemstvo is at present in a somewhat critical state. It no longer enjoys public confidence, and already shows unmistakable symptoms of exhaustion. This fact is recognised by all; and the best authorities are pretty nearly at one regarding the cause of the phenomenon. The Government, they say, conceived in a moment of enthusiasm the project of conferring local self-government on the people, but it afterwards became frightened, and put heavy fetters on the young institution. The assemblies were obliged to accept as presidents the marshals of noblesse. A limit was placed to the taxation of trade and industry, and consequently the mercantile class lost all interest in the proceedings. The publicity which was at first granted to the assemblies was afterwards diminished by giving to the governors of provinces the right to prevent the publication of the minutes and other documents. These restrictions, it is said, have rendered all free, vigorous action impossible.

We have here an explanation which is thoroughly in accordance with Russian conceptions and habits of thought. When anything goes wrong in Russia there is always a tendency to assume that the Government is to blame, and St. Petersburg is expected to supply the remedy. As the Government attempts to control everything, the tendency is perfectly natural, but the explanation to which it gives rise is not wholly satisfactory with regard to the Zemstvo. If it is undeniable that considerable restrictions have been placed on its freedom of action, it is equally undeniable that an institution

which succumbs so easily must have very little true vitality in it. In my opinion the cause of that exhaustion and languor which the Zemstvo at present displays lies much deeper, and must be sought in one of the essential peculiarities of Russian national life. This may be best explained by contrasting briefly the British and Russian method of creating new institutions.

It is a striking trait of our political life that our institutions have all grown out of real, practical wants, keenly felt by a large section of the population. Cautious and conservative in all that concerns the public welfare, we regard change as a necessary evil, and put off the evil day as long as possible, even when convinced that it must inevitably come. Thus our administrative wants are always in advance of our means of satisfying them, and we always use vigorously those means as soon as they are supplied. Our method of supplying the means, too, is peculiar. Instead of making a *tabula rasa*, and beginning from the foundations, we utilise to the utmost what we happen to possess, and add merely what is absolutely indispensable. Metaphorically speaking, we repair and extend our political edifice according to the changing necessities of our mode of life, without paying much attention to abstract principles or the contingencies of the distant future. The building may be an æsthetic monstrosity, belonging to no recognised style of architecture, and built in defiance of the principles laid down by philosophical art critics, but it is well adapted to our requirements, and every hole and corner of it is sure to be utilised.

Very different has been the political history of Russia during the last two centuries. It may be briefly described as a series of revolutions effected peaceably by the autocratic power. Each young energetic sovereign has attempted to inaugurate a new epoch by thoroughly remodelling the administration according to the most approved foreign political philosophy of the time. Institutions have not been allowed to grow spontaneously out of popular wants, but have been invented by bureaucratic theorists to satisfy wants of which the people were still unconscious. The administrative machine has therefore derived little or no motive force from the people, and has always been kept in motion by the unaided energy of the central Government. Under these circumstances it is not surprising that the repeated attempts of the Government to lighten the burdens of centralised administration by creating organs of local self-government should have been eminently unsuccessful.

The Zemstvo, it is true, offered better chances of success than any of its predecessors. A large portion of the nobles had become alive to the necessity of improving the administration, and the popular interest in public affairs was much greater than at any former period. Hence there was at first a period of enthusiasm, during which great preparations were made for future activity, and not a little was actually effected. The institution had all the charm of novelty, and the members felt that the eyes of the public were upon them. For a time all went well, and the Zemstvo was so well pleased with its

own activity that the satirical journals compared it to Narcissus admiring his image reflected in the pool. But when the charm of novelty had passed and the public turned its attention to other matters, the spasmodic energy evaporated, and many of the most active members looked about for more lucrative employment. Such employment was easily found, for at that time there was an unusual demand for able, energetic, educated men. Several branches of the civil service were being reorganised, and railways, banks, and joint-stock companies were being rapidly multiplied. With these the Zemstvo had great difficulty in competing. It could not, like the Imperial service, offer pensions, decorations, and prospects of promotion, nor could it pay such large salaries as the commercial and industrial enterprises. In consequence of all this, the quality of the executive bureaux deteriorated at the same time as the public interest in the institution diminished.

It is right to point out this fact, because it has had some influence in producing that languor from which the Zemstvo is at present suffering. It is not, however, the chief cause. The languor has appeared among the deputies and the public quite as much as in the executive committees. The chief cause lies in the fact that very few people feel keenly the want of those things which the Zemstvo is intended to supply. Take, for instance, a matter of first necessity. That good roads are necessary for the development of the national resources is a principle well known to every Russian who has any pretensions to being educated, but very

few of the enlightened deputies who occasionally enounce the principle feel the necessity of having good roads in their own district in the same sense as they feel the necessity of having opportunities for card-playing. The one is a theoretical, the other a practical want. When the landed proprietors learn to keep accounts accurately, and discover that a certain amount of money spent on roads will be more than compensated for by the diminution in the cost of transport, then, and not till then, will the road committees become vigorous institutions. The same remark, *mutatis mutandis*, may be applied to all the other branches of the local self-government.

In order to illustrate the essentially unpractical character of the institution, I cannot do better than describe briefly an incident which I once witnessed in a District Assembly. When the subject of primary schools came before the meeting, an influential member started up, and proposed that an obligatory system of education should be at once introduced throughout the whole District. Strange to say, the motion was very nearly carried, though all the members present knew—or at least might have known if they had taken the trouble to inquire—that the actual number of schools would have to be multiplied twentyfold, and that the local rates were already very heavy. To preserve his reputation for liberalism, the honourable member further proposed that, though the system should be obligatory, no fines, punishments, or other means of compulsion should be employed. How a system could be obligatory without using some means of compulsion, he did not

condescend to explain. To get out of this difficulty one of his supporters suggested that peasants who did not send their children to school should be excluded from serving as office-bearers in the communes; but this proposition merely created a laugh, for many deputies knew that the peasants would regard this supposed punishment as a valuable privilege. And whilst this discussion about the necessity of introducing an ideal system of obligatory education was being carried on, the street before the windows of the room was covered with a stratum of mud nearly two feet in depth! The other streets were in a similar condition; and a large number of the members always arrived late, because it was almost impossible to come on foot, and there was only one public conveyance in the town. Many members had, fortunately, their private conveyances, but even in these locomotion was by no means easy. One day, in the principal thoroughfare, a member had his tarantass overturned, and he himself was thrown into the mud!

I might describe many minor defects of the Zemstvo in its present condition, but I think it would be unfair to criticise severely a young institution which is animated with good intentions, and errs chiefly from inexperience. With all its defects and errors it is infinitely better than the institutions which it replaced. If we compare it with previous attempts to create local self-government, we must admit that the Russians have made great progress in their political education. What its future may be I do not venture to predict. I am inclined to believe that it will outlive its present state of lethargy, and

will gradually acquire new, healthy vitality, as the people come to feel more and more the need of those things which it is intended to supply. But, on the other hand, it may possibly die of inanition, or be, swept away by some new explosion of reforming enthusiasm before it has had time to strike deep root. Some one has truly said that Time shows little respect to works which have dispensed with its assistance; and nowhere is the saying more frequently exemplified than in Russia, where institutions shoot up like Jonah's gourd, and perish as rapidly, without leaving a trace behind them.

CHAPTER XV.

LANDED PROPRIETORS OF THE OLD SCHOOL.

Russian Hospitality—A Country-house—Its Owner described—His Life, Past and Present—Winter Evenings—Books—Connection with the Outer World—The Crimean War and the Emancipation—A Drunken, Dissolute Proprietor—An old General and his Wife—"Name-days"—A Legendary Monster—A Retired Judge—A Clever Scribe—Social Leniency—Causes of Demoralisation.

Of all the foreign countries in which I have travelled, Russia certainly bears off the palm in all that regards hospitality. Every spring I found myself in possession of a large number of invitations from landed proprietors in different parts of the country—far more than I could possibly accept—and a great part of the summer was generally spent in wandering about from one country-house to another. I have no intention of asking the reader to accompany me in these expeditions—for, though pleasant in reality, they might be tedious in description—but I wish to convey to him some idea of the Russian landed proprietors, and shall therefore single out for description a few typical specimens of the class.

Among the Russian landed proprietors are to be found nearly all ranks and conditions of men, from the rich magnate, surrounded with all the refined luxury of West-European civilisation, to the poor, ill-clad, ignorant owner of a few acres which barely supply him with the

necessaries of life. Let us take, first of all, a few specimens from the middle ranks.

In one of the central provinces, near the bank of a sluggish, meandering stream, stands an irregular group of wooden constructions—old, unpainted, blackened by time, and surmounted by high, sloping roofs of moss-covered planks. The principal building is a long, one-storeyed dwelling-house, constructed at right angles to the road. At the front of the house is a spacious, ill-kept yard, and at the back an equally spacious shady garden, in which art carries on a feeble conflict with encroaching nature. At the other side of the yard, and facing the front door—or rather the front doors, for there are two—stand the stables, hay-shed, and granary, and near to that end of the house which is furthest from the road are two smaller houses, one of which is the kitchen, and the other the Lyudskáya, or servants' apartments. Beyond these we can perceive, through a single row of lime-trees, another group of time-blackened wooden constructions in a still more dilapidated condition. That is the farmyard.

There is certainly not much symmetry in the disposition of these buildings, but there is nevertheless a certain order and meaning in the apparent chaos. All the buildings which do not require stoves are built at a considerable distance from the dwelling-house and kitchen, which are more liable to take fire; and the kitchen stands by itself, because the odour of cookery where oil is used is by no means agreeable, even for those whose olfactory nerves are not very sensitive.

The plan of the house is likewise not without a certain meaning. The rigorous separation of the sexes, which formed a characteristic trait of old Russian society, has long since disappeared, but its influence may still be traced in houses built on the old model. The house in question is one of these, and consequently it is composed of three sections—at the one end the male apartments, at the other the female apartments, and in the middle the neutral territory, comprising the dining-room and the salon. This arrangement has its conveniences, and explains the fact that the house has two front doors. At the back is a third door, which opens from the neutral territory into a spacious verandah overlooking the garden.

Here lives and has lived for many years Ivan Ivanovitch K——, a gentleman of the old school, and a very worthy man of his kind. If we look at him as he sits in his comfortable arm-chair, with his capacious dressing-gown hanging loosely about him, and his long Turkish pipe in his hand, we shall be able to read at a glance something of his character. Nature endowed him with large bones and broad shoulders, and evidently intended him to be a man of great muscular power, but he has contrived to frustrate this benevolent intention, and has now more fat than muscle. His close-cropped head is round as a bullet, and his features are massive and heavy, but the heaviness is relieved by an expression of calm contentment and imperturbable good-nature, which occasionally blossoms into a broad grin. His face is one of those on which no amount of histrionic talent could

produce a look of care and anxiety, and for this it is not to blame, for such an expression has never been demanded of it. Like other mortals he experiences sometimes little annoyances, and on such occasions his small grey eyes sparkle and his face becomes suffused with a crimson glow that suggests apoplexy; but ill-fortune has never been able to get sufficiently firm hold of him to make him understand what such words as care and anxiety mean. Of struggle, disappointment, hope, and all the other feelings which give to human life a dramatic interest, he knows little by hearsay and nothing by experience. He has, in fact, always lived outside of that struggle for existence which modern philosophers declare to be the law of Nature.

Somewhere about sixty years ago Ivan Ivan'itch was born in the house where he still lives. His first lessons he received from the parish priest, and afterwards he was taught by a deacon's son, who had studied in the ecclesiastical seminary to so little purpose that he was unable to pass the final examination. By both of these teachers he was treated with extreme leniency, and was allowed to learn as little as he chose. His father wished him to study hard, but his mother was afraid that study might injure his health, and accordingly gave him several holidays every week. Under these circumstances his progress was naturally not very rapid, and he was still very slightly acquainted with the elementary rules of arithmetic, when his father one day declared that he was already eighteen years of age, and must at once enter the service. But what kind of

service? Ivan had no natural inclination for any kind of activity. The project of entering him as a "Junker" in a cavalry regiment, the colonel of which was an old friend of his father's, did not at all please him. He had no love for military service, and positively disliked the prospect of an examination. Whilst seeming, therefore, to bow implicitly to the paternal authority, he induced his mother to oppose the scheme.

The dilemma in which Ivan found himself was this: in deference to his father he wished to be in the service and to gain that official rank which every Russian noble desires to possess, and at the same time, in deference to his mother and his own tastes, he wished to remain at home and continue his indolent mode of life. The Marshal of Noblesse, who happened to call one day, helped him out of the difficulty by offering to inscribe him as secretary in the *Dvoryánskaya Opéka*, a bureau which acts as curator for the estates of minors. All the duties of this office could be fulfilled by a paid secretary, and the nominal occupant would be periodically promoted as if he were an active official. This was precisely what Ivan required. He accepted eagerly the proposal, and obtained, in the course of seven years, without any effort on his part, the rank of "collegiate secretary," corresponding to the "capitaine-en-second" of the military hierarchy. To mount higher he would have had to seek some place where he could not have fulfilled his duty by proxy, so he determined to rest on his easily-won laurels, and sent in his resignation.

Immediately after the termination of his official life

his married life began. Before his resignation had been accepted he suddenly found himself one morning on the high road to matrimony. Here again there was no effort on his part. The course of true love, which is said never to run smooth for ordinary mortals, ran smooth for him. He never had even the trouble of proposing. The whole affair was arranged by his parents, who chose as bride for their son the only daughter of their nearest neighbour. The young lady was only about sixteen years of age, and was not remarkable for beauty, talent, or any other peculiarity, but she had one very important qualification—she was the daughter of a man who had an estate contiguous to their own, and who might give as a dowry a certain bit of land which they had long desired to add to their own property. The negotiations, being of a delicate nature, were entrusted to an old lady who had a great reputation for diplomatic skill in such matters, and she accomplished her mission with such success, that in the course of a few weeks the preliminaries were arranged and the day fixed for the wedding. Thus Ivan Ivan'itch won his bride as easily as he had won his Tchin of "collegiate secretary."

Though the bridegroom had received rather than taken to himself a wife and did not imagine for a moment that he was in love, he had no reason to regret the choice that was made for him. Maria Petrovna was exactly suited by character and education to be the wife of a man like Ivan Ivan'itch. She had grown up at home in the society of nurses and servant-maids, and had

never learned anything more than could be obtained from the parish priest and from "Ma'mselle," a personage occupying a position midway between a servant-maid and a governess. The first events of her life were the announcement that she was to be married and the preparations for the wedding. All her life afterwards she remembered the delight which the purchase of her trousseau afforded her, and kept in her memory a full catalogue of the articles bought. The first years of her married life were not very happy, for she was treated by her mother-in-law as a naughty child who required to be frequently snubbed and lectured; but she bore the discipline with exemplary patience, and in due time became her own mistress and autocratic ruler in all domestic affairs. From that time she has lived an active, uneventful life. Between her and her husband there is as much mutual attachment as can reasonably be expected in phlegmatic natures after thirty years of matrimony. She devotes all her energies to satisfying his simple material wants—of intellectual wants he has none—and securing his comfort in every possible way. Under this fostering care he has, as he is wont to say, "effeminated himself" (*obábilsya*). His love of hunting and shooting has died out, he cares less and less to visit his neighbours, and each successive year he spends more and more time in his comfortable arm-chair.

The daily life of this worthy couple is singularly regular and monotonous, varying only with the changing seasons. In summer Ivan Ivan'itch gets up about seven o'clock, and puts on, with the assistance of his

valet de chambre, a simple costume, consisting chiefly of a faded, plentifully-stained dressing-gown. Having nothing particular to do, he sits down at the open window and looks into the yard. As the servants pass he stops and questions them, and then gives them orders, or scolds them, as circumstances demand. Towards nine o'clock tea is announced, and he goes into the dining-room—a long, narrow apartment with bare wooden floor and no furniture but a table and chairs, all in a more or less rickety condition. Here he finds his wife with the tea-urn before her. In a few minutes the younger children come in, kiss their papa's hand, and take their places round the table. As this morning meal consists merely of bread and tea, it does not last long; and all disperse to their several occupations. The head of the house begins the labours of the day by resuming his seat at the open window and having his Turkish pipe filled and lighted by a boy whose special function is to keep his master's pipes in order. When he has smoked two or three pipes and indulged in a proportionate amount of silent contemplation, he goes out with the intention of visiting the stables and farm-yard, but generally before he has crossed the court he finds the heat unbearable, and returns to his former position by the open window. Here he sits tranquilly till the sun has so far moved round that the verandah at the back of the house is completely in the shade, when he has his arm-chair removed thither, and sits there till dinner-time.

Maria Petrovna spends her morning in a more active

way. As soon as the breakfast-table has been cleared, she goes to the larder, takes stock of the provisions, arranges the *menu du jour*, and gives to the cook the necessary materials, with detailed instructions as to how they are to be prepared. The rest of the morning she devotes to her other household duties.

Towards one o'clock dinner is announced, and Ivan Ivan'itch prepares his appetite by swallowing at a gulp a wine-glassful of home-made bitters. Dinner is the great event of the day. The food is abundant and of good quality, but mushrooms, onions, and fat play a rather too important part in the repast, and the whole is prepared with very little attention to the recognised principles of culinary hygiene. Many of the dishes, indeed, would make a British valetudinarian stand aghast, but they seem to produce no bad effect on those Russian organisms which have never been weakened by town life, nervous excitement, or intellectual exertion.

No sooner has the last dish been removed than a deathlike stillness falls upon the house; it is the time of the after-dinner siesta. The young folks go into the garden, and all the other members of the household give way to the drowsiness naturally engendered by a heavy meal on a hot summer day. Ivan Ivan'itch retires to his own room, from which the flies have been carefully expelled by his pipe-bearer. Maria Petrovna dozes in an arm-chair in the sitting-room, with a pocket-handkerchief spread over her face. The servants snore in the corridors, the garret, or the hay-shed; and even the old

watch-dog in the corner of the yard stretches himself out at full length on the shady side of his kennel.

In about two hours the house gradually re-awakens. Doors begin to creak; the names of various servants are bawled out in all tones, from bass to falsetto; and footsteps are heard in the yard. Soon a man-servant issues from the kitchen, bearing an enormous tea-urn, which puffs like a little steam-engine. The family assemble for tea. In Russia, as elsewhere, sleep after a heavy meal produces thirst, so that the tea and other beverages are very acceptable. Then some little delicacies are served—such as fruit and wild berries, or cucumbers with honey, or something else of the kind, and the family again disperses. Ivan Ivan'itch takes a turn in the fields on his *begovuiya droshki*—an extremely light vehicle, composed of two pairs of wheels joined together by a single board, on which the driver sits stride-legged; and Maria Petrovna probably receives a visit from the Popadyà (the priest's wife), who is the chief gossipmonger of the neighbourhood. There is not much scandal in the district, but what little there is the Popadyà carefully collects, and distributes among her acquaintances with undiscriminating generosity.

In the evening it often happens that a little group of peasants come into the court, and ask to see the "master." The master goes to the door, and generally finds that they have some favour to request. In reply to his question, "Well, children, what do you want?" they tell their story in a confused, rambling way, several of them speaking at a time, and he has to question and

cross-question them before he comes to understand clearly what they desire. If he tells them he cannot grant it, they probably do not accept a first refusal, but endeavour by means of supplication to make him reconsider his decision. Stepping forward a little, and bowing low, one of the group begins in a half-respectful, half-familiar, caressing tone—"Little father, Ivan Ivan'itch, be gracious; you are our father, and we are your children"—and so on. Ivan Ivan'itch good-naturedly listens, and again explains that he cannot grant what they ask, but they have still hopes of gaining their point by entreaty, and continue their supplications till at last his patience is exhausted and he says to them in a paternal tone, "Now, enough! enough! you are blockheads—blockheads all round! there's no use talking, it can't be done." And with these words he enters the house, so as to prevent all further discussion.

A regular part of the evening's occupation is the interview with the steward. The work that has just been done, and the programme for the morrow, are always discussed at great length; and much time is spent in speculating as to the weather during the next few days. On this latter point the calendar is always carefully consulted, and great confidence is placed in its predictions, though past experience has often shown that they are not to be implicitly trusted. The conversation drags on till supper is announced, and immediately after that meal, which is an abridged repetition of dinner, all retire for the night.

Thus pass the days, and weeks, and months, in the

house of Ivan Ivan'itch, and rarely is there any deviation from the ordinary programme. The climate necessitates, of course, some slight modifications. When it is cold, the doors and windows have to be kept shut, and after heavy rains, those who do not like to wade in mud have to remain in the house or garden. In the long winter evenings the family assemble in the sitting-room, and all kill time as they best can. Ivan Ivan'itch smokes his long pipe, and meditates, or listens to the barrel-organ played by one of the children. Maria Petrovna knits a stocking. The old aunt, who commonly spends the winter with them, plays Patience, and sometimes draws from the game conclusions as to the future. Her favourite predictions are that a stranger will arrive, or that a marriage will take place, and she can determine the sex of the stranger and the colour of the bridegroom's hair; but beyond this her art does not go, and she cannot satisfy the young ladies' curiosity as to further details.

Books and newspapers are rarely seen in the sitting-room, but for those who wish to read, there is a bookcase full of miscellaneous literature, which gives some idea of the literary tastes of the family during several generations. The oldest volumes were bought by Ivan Ivan'itch's grandfather—a man who, according to the family traditions, enjoyed the confidence of the great Catherine. Though wholly overlooked by recent historians, he was evidently a man who had some pretensions to culture. He had his portrait painted by a foreign artist of considerable talent—it still hangs in the sitting room—and he bought several pieces of Sèvres ware, the

last of which stands on a commode in the corner and contrasts strangely with the rude home-made furniture and squalid appearance of the apartment. Among the books which bear his name are the tragedies of Sumarókof, who imagined himself to be "the Russian Voltaire;" the amusing comedies of Von-Wisin, some of which still keep the stage; the loud-sounding odes of the courtly Derzhávin; two or three books containing the mystic wisdom of Freemasonry as interpreted by Schwarz and Novikoff; Russian translations of Richardson's "Pamela," "Sir Charles Grandison," and "Clarissa Harlowe;" Rousseau's "Nouvelle Héloise," in Russian garb; and three or four volumes of Voltaire in the original. Among the works collected at a somewhat later period are translations of Ann Radcliffe, of Scott's early novels, and of Ducray Duménil, whose stories, "Lolotte et Fanfan" and "Victor," once enjoyed a great reputation. At this point the literary tastes of the family appear to have died out, for the succeeding literature is represented exclusively by Kryloff's Fables, a farmer's manual, a handbook of family medicine, and a series of calendars. There are, however, some signs of a revival, for on the lowest shelf stand recent editions of Pushkin, Lérmontof, and Gógol, and a few works by living authors.

Sometimes the monotony of the winter is broken by visiting neighbours and receiving visitors in return, or in a more decided way by a visit of a few days to the capital of the province. In the latter case Maria Petrovna spends nearly all her time in shopping, and brings home a large collection of miscellaneous articles.

The inspection of these by the assembled family forms an important domestic event, which completely throws into the shade the occasional visits of pedlers and colporteurs. Then there are the festivities at Christmas and Easter, and occasionally little incidents of a less agreeable kind. It may be that there is a heavy fall of snow, so that it is necessary to cut roads to the kitchen and stables; or wolves enter the courtyard at night and have a fight with the watch-dogs; or the news is brought that a peasant who had been drinking in a neighbouring village has been found frozen to death on the road.

Altogether the family live a very isolated life, but they have one bond of connection with the great outer world. Two of the sons are officers in the army, and both of them write home occasionally to their mother and sisters. To these two youths is devoted all the little stock of sentimentality which Maria Petrovna possesses. She can talk of them by the hour to any one who will listen to her, and has related to the Popadyà a hundred times every trivial incident of their lives. Though they have never given her much cause for anxiety, she lives in constant fear that some evil may befall them. What she most fears is that they may be sent on a campaign or may fall in love with actresses. War and actresses are in fact the two bugbears of her existence, and whenever she has a disquieting dream she asks the priest to offer up a *molében* for the safety of her absent ones. Sometimes she ventures to express her anxiety to her husband, and recommends him to write to them; but he considers writing a letter a very serious bit of work,

and always replies, evasively, "Well, well, we must think about it."

During the Crimean War—though the two sons were not yet in the army—Ivan Ivan'itch half awoke from his habitual lethargy, and read occasionally the meagre official reports published by the Government. He was a little surprised that no great victories were reported, and that the army did not at once advance on Constantinople. As to causes he never speculated. Some of his neighbours told him that the army was disorganised, and the whole system of Nicholas had been proved to be utterly worthless. That might all be very true, but he did not understand military and political matters. No doubt it would all come right in the end. All did come right, after a fashion, and he again gave up reading newspapers; but ere long he was startled by reports much more alarming than any rumours of war. People began to talk about the peasant question, and to say openly that the serfs must soon be emancipated. For once in his life Ivan Ivan'itch asked explanations. Finding one of his neighbours, who had always been a respectable, sensible man, and a severe disciplinarian, talking in this way, he took him aside and asked what it all meant. The neighbour explained that the old order of things had shown itself bankrupt and was doomed, that a new epoch was opening, that everything was to be reformed, and that the Emperor, in accordance with a secret clause of the Treaty with the Allies, was about to grant a Constitution! Ivan Ivan'itch listened for a little in silence,

and then, with a gesture of impatience, interrupted the speaker: "Polno durátchitsya! enough of fun and tomfoolery. Vassili Petrovitch, tell me seriously what you mean."

When Vassili Petrovitch vowed that he spoke in all seriousness, his friend gazed at him with a look of intense compassion, and remarked, as he turned away, "So you, too, have gone out of your mind!"

The utterances of Vassili Petrovitch, which his lethargic, sober-minded friend regarded as indicating temporary insanity in the speaker, represented fairly the mental condition of very many Russian nobles at that time, and were not without a certain foundation. The idea about a secret clause in the Treaty of Paris was purely imaginary, but it was quite true that the country was entering on an epoch of great reforms, among which the Emancipation question occupied the chief place. Of this even the sceptical Ivan Ivan'itch was soon convinced. The Emperor formally declared to the noblesse of the province of Moscow that the actual state of things could not continue for ever, and called on the landed proprietors to consider by what means the condition of their serfs might be ameliorated. Provincial committees were formed for the purpose of preparing definite projects, and gradually it became apparent that the Emancipation of the serfs was really at hand.

Ivan Ivan'itch was somewhat alarmed at the prospect of losing his authority over his serfs. Though he had never been a cruel taskmaster, he had not spared the rod when he considered it necessary, and he believed

birch-twigs to be a necessary instrument in the Russian system of agriculture. For some time he drew consolation from the thought that peasants were not birds of the air, that they must under all circumstances require food and clothing, and that they would be ready to serve him as agricultural labourers; but when he learned that they were to receive a large part of the estate for their own use, his hopes fell, and he greatly feared that he would be inevitably ruined.

These dark forebodings have not been by any means realised. His serfs have been emancipated and have received about a half of the estate, but in return for the land ceded they pay him annually a considerable sum, and they are always ready to cultivate his fields for a fair remuneration. The yearly outlay is now considerably greater, but the price of grain has risen, and this quite counterbalances the additional yearly expenditure. The administration of the estate is much less patriarchal; much that was formerly left to custom and tacit understanding is now regulated by express agreement on purely commercial principles; a great deal more money is paid out and a great deal more received; there is much less authority in the hands of the master, and his responsibilities are proportionately diminished; but in spite of all these changes, Ivan Ivan'itch would have great difficulty in deciding whether he is a richer or a poorer man. He has fewer horses and fewer servants, but he has still more than he requires, and his mode of life has undergone no perceptible alteration. Maria Petrovna complains that she is no longer supplied with

eggs, chickens, and home-spun linen by the peasants, and everything is three times as dear as it used to be; but somehow the larder is still full, and abundance reigns in the house as of old.

Ivan Ivan'itch does certainly not possess transcendent qualities of any kind. It would be impossible to make a hero out of him, even though his own son should be his biographer. Muscular Christians may reasonably despise him, and active, energetic men may fairly condemn him for his indolence and apathy. But on the other hand he has no very bad qualities. His vices are of the passive, negative kind. He is a respectable if not distinguished member of society, and appears a very worthy man when compared with many of his neighbours who have been brought up in similar conditions. Take, for instance, his younger brother Dimítri, who lives a short way off.

Dimítri Ivanovitch, like his brother Ivan, had been endowed by Nature with a very decided repugnance to prolonged intellectual exertion, but as he was a man of good parts he did not fear a junker's examination—especially when he could count on the colonel's protection—and accordingly entered the army. In his regiment were a number of jovial young officers like himself, always ready to relieve the monotony of garrison life by a little boisterous dissipation, and among these he easily acquired the reputation of being a thoroughly good fellow. In drinking-bouts he could hold his own with the best of them, and in all mad pranks invariably played the chief part. By this means he endeared himself to his comrades, and for a time all went well. The

colonel had himself sown wild oats plentifully in his youth, and was quite disposed to overlook, as far as possible, the bacchanalian peccadilloes of his subordinates. But before many years had passed, the regiment suddenly changed its character. Certain rumours had reached head-quarters, and the Emperor Nicholas appointed as colonel a stern disciplinarian of German origin, who aimed at making the regiment a kind of machine that should work with the accuracy of a chronometer. This change did not at all suit the tastes and habits of Dimítri Ivan'itch. He chafed under the restraints of the new régime, and as soon as he had gained the rank of lieutenant retired from the service to enjoy the freedom of country life. Shortly afterwards his father died, and he thereby became owner of an estate, with two hundred serfs. He did not, like his elder brother, marry, and "effeminate himself," but he did worse. In his little independent kingdom—for such was practically a Russian estate in the good old times which have recently come to an end—he was lord of all he surveyed, and gave full scope to his boisterous humour, his passion for sport, and his love of drinking and dissipation. Many of the mad pranks in which he indulged will long be preserved by popular tradition, but they cannot well be related here.

Dimítri Ivan'itch is now a man past middle age, and still continues his wild, dissipated life. His house resembles an ill-kept, disreputable tavern. The floor is filthy, the furniture chipped and broken, the servants indolent, slovenly, and in rags. Dogs of all breeds and

sizes roam about the rooms and corridors. The master, when not asleep, is always in a more or less complete state of intoxication. Generally he has one or two guests staying with him—men of the same type as himself—and days and nights are spent in drinking and card-playing. When he cannot have his usual boon-companions he sends for one or two small proprietors who live near—men who are legally nobles, but who are so poor that they differ little from peasants. When ordinary resources fail he occasionally has recourse to the violent expedient of ordering his servants to stop the first passing travellers, whoever they may be, and bring them in by persuasion or force, as circumstances may demand. The travellers may be in the greatest hurry, or they may have the most decided repugnance to accepting such rough, undesired hospitality, but all their excuses, protestations, and remonstrances will be in vain. A wheel will be taken off their tarantass, or some indispensable part of the harness will be secreted, and they may consider themselves fortunate if they succeed in getting away next morning.*

In the time of serfage the domestic serfs had much to bear from their capricious, violent master. They lived in an atmosphere of abusive language, and were subjected not unfrequently to corporal punishment. Worse than this, their master was constantly threatening to

* This custom has fortunately become now very rare; it is still, however, occasionally practised in outlying districts. An incident of the kind happened to a friend of mine in 1871. He was detained against his will for two whole days by a man whom he had never seen before, and at last effected his escape by bribing the servants of his tyrannical host.

"shave their forehead"—that is to say, to give them as recruits—and occasionally he put his threat into execution, in spite of the wailings and entreaties of the culprit and his relations. And yet, strange to say, nearly all of them remained with him as free servants after the Emancipation, and will probably remain with him till he is ejected by his creditors or carried off by a stroke of apoplexy. What will become of them then it is difficult to say, for they have acquired habits which render them unfit for any other kind of life.

In justice to the Russian landed proprietors I must say that the class represented by Dimítri Ivan'itch is now very small, and is steadily decreasing in number. It was the natural result of serfage and social stagnation —of a state of society in which there were few legal and moral restraints, and few inducements to honourable activity.

Among the other landed proprietors of the district, one of the best known is Nicolai Petróvitch B——, an old military man with the rank of general. Like Ivan Ivan'itch, he belongs to the old school; but the two men must be contrasted rather than compared. The difference in their lives and characters is reflected in their outward appearance. Ivan Ivan'itch, as we know, is portly in form and heavy in all his movements, and loves to loll in his arm-chair or to loaf about the house in a capacious dressing-gown. The General, on the contrary, is thin, wiry, and muscular, wears habitually a close-buttoned military tunic, and always has a stern expression, the force of which is considerably augmented by a

bristly moustache resembling a shoe-brush. As he paces up and down the room, knitting his brows and gazing at the floor, he looks as if he were forming combinations of the first magnitude; but those who know him well are aware that this is an optical delusion, of which he is himself to some extent a victim. He is quite innocent of deep thought and concentrated intellectual effort. Though he frowns so fiercely he is by no means of a naturally ferocious temperament. Had he passed all his life in the country he would probably have been as good-natured and phlegmatic as Ivan Ivan'itch himself, but, unlike that worshipper of tranquillity, he had aspired to rise in the service, and had adopted the stern, formal bearing which the Emperor Nicholas considered indispensable in an officer. The manner which he had at first put on as part of his uniform became by the force of habit almost a part of his nature, and at the age of thirty he was an officer after the Iron Emperor's own heart: a stern disciplinarian and uncompromising formalist, who confined his attention exclusively to drill and other military duties. Thus he rose steadily by his own merit, and reached the goal of his early ambition—the rank of general. As soon as this point was reached he determined to leave the service and retire to his estate. Many considerations urged him to take this step. He was already sixty years of age, and had little prospect of further advancement. He enjoyed the title of Excellency which he had long coveted, and when he put on his full uniform his breast was bespangled with medals and decorations. Since the death of his father

the revenues of his estate had been steadily decreasing, and report said that the best wood in his forest was rapidly disappearing. His wife had no love for the country, and would have preferred to settle in Moscow or St. Petersburg, but they found that with their small income they could not live in a large town in a style suitable to their rank.

The General determined to introduce order into his estate, and became a practical farmer; but a little experience convinced him that his new functions were much more difficult than the commanding of a regiment. He has long since given over the practical management of his estate to a steward, who was formerly one of his serfs, and he contents himself with exercising what he imagines to be an efficient control. Though he wishes to do much, he finds small scope for his activity, and spends his days in pretty much the same way as Ivan Ivan'itch, with this difference, that he plays cards whenever he gets an opportunity, and reads regularly the *Russki Invalid*, the official military paper. As soon as he receives the current number of this paper he sits down and reads it conscientiously from beginning to end. The part which specially interests him is the list of promotions, retirements, and Imperial rewards for merit and seniority. When he sees the announcement that some old comrade has been made an officer of his Majesty's suite or has received a *grand cordon*, he frowns a little more than usual, and is tempted to regret that he retired from the service. Had he waited patiently, perhaps a bit of good fortune might have fallen likewise

to his lot. This idea takes possession of him, and during the remainder of the day he is more taciturn than usual. His wife notices the change, and knows the reason of it, but has too much good sense and tact to make any allusion to the subject.

Anna Alexándrovna, so the good lady is called, is a buxom dame of nearly fifty years of age, who does not at all resemble the wife of Ivan Ivan'itch. She has been long accustomed to a numerous military society, with dinner-parties, dancing, promenades, card-playing, and all the other amusements of garrison life. For domestic concerns she has no taste. Her knowledge of culinary affairs is extremely vague, and she has no idea of how to make preserves, nalivka, and other home-made delicacies, though Maria Petrovna, who is universally acknowledged to be a great adept in such matters, has proposed a hundred times to give her some choice recipes. In short, domestic affairs are a burden to her, and she entrusts them as far as possible to the housekeeper. Her young children, too, are somewhat of an encumbrance, and accordingly she relegates them to the care of the nurse and the governess. Altogether she finds country life very tiresome, but, possessing that placid, philosophical temperament which seems to have some causal connection with corpulence, she submits without murmuring, and tries to lighten a little the unavoidable monotony by paying visits and receiving visitors. The neighbours within a radius of twenty miles are, with few exceptions, more or less of the Ivan Ivan'itch and Maria Petrovna type—decidedly rustic in their manners and

conceptions; but their company is better than absolute solitude, and they have at least the good quality of being always able and willing to play cards for any number of hours. Besides this, Anna Alexándrovna has the satisfaction of feeling that amongst them she is almost a great personage, and unquestionably an authority in all matters of taste and fashion; and she feels especially well disposed towards those of them who frequently address her as "Your Excellency."

The chief festivities take place on the "name-days" of the General and his spouse—that is to say, the days sacred to St. Nicholas and St. Anna. On these occasions all the neighbours come to offer their congratulations, and remain to dinner as a matter of course. After dinner the older visitors sit down to cards, and the young people extemporise a dance. The fête is specially successful when the eldest son comes home to take part in it, and brings one or two of his comrades with him. He has been already some years in the army, and is on the road to being a general like his father.* One of the comrades is expected soon to offer his hand to Olga Nikola'vna, the second daughter, a fair-haired, pale-faced young lady, who is always in a state of languor bordering on collapse. She and her elder sister, a young person of the same temperament, were educated in one of the great "Instituts"—gigantic boarding-schools, founded and kept up by the Government, for the

* Generals are much more common in Russia than in other countries. A few years ago there was an old lady in Moscow who had a family of ten sons, all of whom were generals! The rank may be obtained in the civil as well as the military service.

daughters of those who are supposed to have deserved well of their country. Having now finished their education, they live at home, bewailing the absence of "civilised" society, and killing time in a harmless, elegant way by means of music, needlework, and light literature.

At those "name-day" gatherings one is sure to meet several interesting specimens of the old school. One of the most conspicuous guests is a tall corpulent old man, in a threadbare frock-coat, which wrinkles up about his waist. His shaggy eyebrows almost cover his small dull eyes, his heavy moustache partially conceals a large mouth, strongly indicating sensuous tendencies. His hair is cut so short that it is difficult to say what its colour would be if it were allowed to grow. He always arrives in his tarantass just in time for the "zakuska" —the appetising collation that is served shortly before dinner—grunts out a few congratulations to the host and hostess and monosyllabic greetings to his acquaintances, eats a copious meal, and immediately afterwards places himself at a card-table, where he sits in silence so long as he can get any one to play with him. People do not like, however, to play with Andrei Vassil'itch, for his society is not agreeable, and he always contrives to go home with a well-filled purse.

Andrei Vassil'itch is a noted man in the neighbourhood. He is the centre of a whole cycle of legends, and his name, it is said, is often used with effect by nurses to frighten naughty children. Thus any one who will take

the trouble to visit the district of X—— may still see a legendary monster in the flesh. How far the numerous stories told about him are true I cannot pretend to say, but they are certainly not without foundation. In his youth he served for some time in the army, and was celebrated, even in an age when martinets had always a good chance of promotion, for his brutality to his subordinates. His career was cut short, however, when he had only the rank of captain. Having compromised himself in some way, he found it advisable to send in his resignation and retire to his estate. Here he organised his house on Mahometan rather than on Christian principles, and ruled his servants and peasants as he had been accustomed to rule his soldiers—using corporal punishment in merciless fashion. His wife did not venture to protest against the Mahometan arrangements, and any peasant who stood in the way of their realisation was at once given as a recruit, or transported to Siberia, in accordance with his master's demand.* At last his tyranny and extortion drove his serfs to revolt. One night his house was surrounded and set on fire, but he contrived to escape the fate that was prepared for him, and caused all who had taken part in the revolt to be mercilessly punished. This was a severe lesson, but it had no effect upon him. Taking precautions against a similar surprise, he continued to tyrannise and extort

* When a proprietor considered any of his serfs unruly he could, according to law, have them transported to Siberia without trial, on condition of paying the expenses of transport. Arrived at their destination, they received land, and lived as free colonists, with the single restriction that they were not allowed to leave the locality where they were settled.

as before, until in 1861 the serfs were emancipated, and his authority came to an end.

A very different sort of man is Pavel Trophim'itch, who likewise comes regularly to pay his respects and present his congratulations to the General and "Ghene-ralsha."* It is pleasant to turn from the hard, wrinkled, morose features of the legendary monster and look at the soft, smooth, jovial face of this man, who has always been accustomed to look at the bright side of things, till his face has caught something of their brightness. "A good, jovial, honest face!" you involuntarily exclaim as you look at him. True; but you must beware of drawing from it hasty conclusions as to the character of the owner. Jovial he certainly is, for few men are more capable of making and enjoying mirth. Good he may be also called, if the word be taken in the sense of good-natured, for he never takes offence, and is always ready to do a kindly action if it does not cost him any trouble. But as to his honesty, that requires some qualification. Wholly untarnished his reputation certainly cannot be, for he was for many years a judge in the District Court, and the court to which he belonged was no better than other courts of the same kind. To be a judge in those courts—which were abolished about ten years ago—and to be at the same time an honest man, required most unusual moral stamina. Pavel Trophim'itch was not a Cato, and accordingly succumbed. He had never studied law, and made no pretensions to the possession of great legal knowledge. To all who would listen to him he

* The female form of the word General.

declared openly that he knew much more about pointers and setters than about legal formalities.. But his estate was very small, and he could not afford to give up his appointment. Though the nominal salary was extremely modest, the actual revenue was considerable, for in those days no sane man attempted to carry on a suit without greasing the palms of the officials. Both parties paid the secretary, whose duty it was to get up the case and present it to the judges, and the secretary gave a share of these earnings to his superiors. Pavel Trophim'itch was by no means a judge of the worst kind. He had been known to protect widows and orphans against those who wished to despoil them, and no amount of money from the other party would induce him to give an unjust decision against a friend who had privately explained the case to him; but when he knew nothing of the case or of the parties he readily signed the decision prepared by the secretary, and quietly pocketed the proceeds, without feeling any very disagreeable twinges of conscience. All judges, he knew, did likewise, and he had no pretension to being better than his fellows.

When Pavel Trophim'itch plays cards at the General's house or elsewhere, a small, awkward, clean-shaven man, with dark eyes and a Tartar cast of countenance, may generally be seen sitting at the same table. That is Alexei Petróvitch T——. Whether he really has any Tartar blood in him it is impossible to say, but certainly his ancestors for one or two generations were all good orthodox Christians. His father was a poor military surgeon in a marching regiment, and he himself became at an

early age a scribe in one of the bureaux of the district town. He was then very poor, and had great difficulty in supporting life on the miserable pittance which he received as a salary, but he was a sharp, clever youth, and soon discovered that even a scribe had a great many opportunities of extorting money from the ignorant public. These opportunities he used with great ability, and became known as one of the most accomplished bribe-takers (vzyátotchniki) in the district. His position, however, was so very subordinate that he would never have become rich had he not fallen upon a very ingenious expedient which completely succeeded. Hearing that a small proprietor, who had an only daughter, had come to live in the town for a few weeks, he took a room in the inn where the new-comers lived, and when he had made their acquaintance he fell dangerously ill. Feeling his last hours approaching, he sent for a priest, confided to him that he had amassed a large fortune, and requested that a will should be drawn up. In the will he bequeathed large sums to all his relations, and a considerable sum to the parish church. The whole affair was to be kept a secret till after his death, but his neighbour—the old gentleman with the daughter—was called in to act as a witness. When all this had been done he did not die, but rapidly recovered, and now induced the old gentleman to whom he had confided his secret to grant him his daughter's hand. The daughter had no objections to marry a man possessed of such wealth, and the marriage was duly celebrated. Shortly after this the father died—without discovering, it is to

be hoped, the hoax that had been perpetrated—and Alexei Petróvitch became virtual possessor of a very comfortable little estate. With the change in his fortunes he completely changed his principles, or at least his practice. In all his dealings he is now strictly honest. He lends money, it is true, at from ten to fifteen per cent., but that is considered in these parts not a very exorbitant rate of interest, and all admit that he is never unnecessarily hard upon his creditors. In the elective local administration he plays a prominent part. Though he rarely speaks in the Zemstvo assembly, he is a most useful man in committees, and always distinguishes himself by his sound common sense and his wide practical knowledge.

It may seem strange that an honourable man like the General should receive in his house such a motley company, comprising men of decidedly tarnished reputation; but in this respect he is not at all peculiar. One constantly meets in Russian society persons who are known to have been guilty of flagrant dishonesty, and we find that men who are themselves honourable enough associate with them on friendly terms. This social leniency, moral laxity, or whatever else it may be called, is the result of various causes. Several concurrent influences have tended to lower the moral standard of the noblesse. Formerly, when the noble lived on his estate, he could play with impunity the petty tyrant, and could freely indulge his legitimate and illegitimate caprices without any legal or moral restraint. I do not at all mean to assert that all proprietors abused their

authority, but I venture to say that no class of men can long possess such enormous arbitrary power over those around them without being thereby more or less demoralised. When the noble entered the service he had not the same immunity from restraint—on the contrary, his position resembled rather that of the serf—but he breathed an atmosphere of peculation and jobbery, little conducive to moral purity and uprightness. If an official had refused to associate with those who were tainted with the prevailing vices, he would have found himself completely isolated, and would have been ridiculed as a modern Don Quixote. Add to this that all classes of the Russian people have a certain kindly, apathetic good-nature which makes them very charitable towards their neighbours, and that they do not always distinguish between forgiving private injury and excusing public crimes. If we bear all this in mind we may readily understand that in the time of serfage and maladministration a man could be guilty of very reprehensible practices without incurring social excommunication.

When serfage was being abolished and the administration was undergoing radical reforms, at the commencement of the present reign, a strong, healthy public opinion suddenly sprang into existence. For a time society revelled in virtuous indignation against the prevailing abuses, and placed on the pillory the most prominent delinquents. The effect of that outburst is still felt, for many things which would have passed unnoticed thirty years ago would now be branded with

public infamy; but the intensity of the moral feeling has declined, and there are now unmistakable symptoms that at least a part of the old apathy is gradually returning. This might have been predicted by any one well acquainted with the character and past history of the Russian people. Russia advances on the road of progress, not in that smooth, gradual, prosaic way to which we are accustomed, but by a series of unconnected, frantic efforts, each of which is naturally followed by a period of temporary exhaustion.

CHAPTER XVI.

PROPRIETORS OF THE MODERN SCHOOL.

A Russian *petit maître*—His House and Surroundings—Abortive Attempts to improve Agriculture and the condition of the Serfs—A Comparison—A "Liberal" Tchinovnik—His Idea of Progress—A Justice of the Peace—His Opinion of Russian Literature, Tchinovniks, and *petits maîtres*—His supposed and real Character—An extreme Radical—Disorders in the Universities—Administrative Procedure—Russia's capacity for accomplishing Political and Social Evolutions—A Court Dignitary in his Country-house.

In the district in which Nikolai Petróvitch lives the resident landed proprietors are, for the most part, as I have said, men of the old school, decidedly rustic in their manners and conceptions. But there are a few exceptions, and among the most conspicuous of these is Victor Alexandr'itch L——. As we approach his house we can at once perceive that he differs from the majority of his neighbours. The gate is painted and moves easily on its hinges, the fence is in good repair, the short avenue leading up to the front door is well kept, and in the garden we can perceive at a glance that more attention is paid to flowers than to vegetables. The house is of wood, and not large, but it has some architectural pretensions in the form of a great, pseudo-Doric wooden portico that covers three-fourths of the façade. In the interior we remark everywhere the influence of Western civilisation. Victor Alexandr'itch is by no means richer than Ivan Ivan'itch, but his rooms are much more luxuriously furnished. The furniture is

of a lighter model, more comfortable, and in a much better state of preservation. Instead of the bare, scantily furnished sitting-room, with the old-fashioned barrel-organ which played only six airs, we find an elegant drawing-room, with a piano by one of the most approved makers, and numerous articles of foreign manufacture, comprising a small buhl table and two bits of genuine old wedgewood. The servants are clean, and dressed in European costume. The master, too, is very different in appearance. He pays great attention to his toilette, wearing a dressing-gown only in the early morning, and a fashionable lounging coat during the rest of the day. The Turkish pipes which his grandfather loved he holds in abhorrence, and habitually smokes cigarettes. With his wife and daughters he always speaks French, and calls them by French or English names. But the part of the house which most strikingly illustrates the difference between the old and new styles is "le cabinet de monsieur." In the cabinet of Ivan Ivan'itch the furniture consists of a broad sofa which serves as a bed, a few deal chairs, a long range of pipes, and a clumsy deal table, on which are generally to be found a bundle of greasy papers, an old chipped ink-bottle, a pen, and a calendar. The cabinet of Victor Alexandr'itch has an entirely different appearance. It is small, but at once comfortable and elegant. The principal objects which it contains are a library-table, with ink-stand, presse-papier, paper-cutters, and other articles in keeping, and in the opposite corner a large bookcase. The collection of books is remarkable, not from the number of volumes

or the presence of rare editions, but from the variety of the subjects. History, art, fiction, the drama, political economy, and agriculture are represented in about equal proportions. Some of the works are in Russian, others in German, a large number in French, and a few in Italian. The collection illustrates the former life and present occupations of the owner.

The father of Victor Alexandr'itch was a landed proprietor, who had made a successful career in the civil service, and desired that his son should follow the same profession. For this purpose Victor was first carefully trained at home, and then sent to the University of Moscow, where he spent four years as a student of law. From the University he passed to the Ministry of the Interior in St. Petersburg, but he found the monotonous routine of official life not at all suited to his taste, and very soon sent in his resignation. The death of his father had made him proprietor of an estate, and thither he retired, hoping to find there plenty of occupation more congenial than the writing of official papers.

At the University of Moscow he had attended the lectures of the famous Granófski, and had got through a large amount of desultory reading. The chief result of his studies was the acquisition of many ill-digested general principles, and certain vague, generous, humanitarian aspirations. With this intellectual capital he hoped to lead a useful life in the country. When he had repaired and furnished the house he set himself to improve the estate. In the course of his promiscuous reading he had stumbled on some descriptions of English

and Tuscan agriculture, and had there learned what wonders might be effected by a rational system of farming. Why should not Russia follow the example of England and Tuscany? By proper drainage, plentiful manure, good ploughs, and the cultivation of artificial grasses, the production might be multiplied tenfold; and by the introduction of agricultural machines the manual labour might be greatly diminished. All this seemed simple as a sum in arithmetic, and Victor Alexandr'itch, "more scholarium rei familiaris ignarus," without a moment's hesitation expended his ready money in procuring from England a threshing-machine, ploughs, harrows, and other implements of the newest model.

The arrival of these was an event that was long remembered. The peasants examined them with attention, not unmixed with wonder, but said nothing. When the master explained to them the advantages of the new instruments, they still remained silent. Only one old man, gazing at the threshing-machine, remarked, in an audible "aside," "A cunning people these Germans!"* On being asked for their opinion, they replied, vaguely, "How should we know? It *ought* to be so." But when their master had retired, and was explaining to his wife and the French governess that the chief obstacle to progress in Russia was the apathetic indolence and conservative spirit of the peasantry, they expressed their opinions more freely. "These may be all very well for

* The Russian peasant comprehends all the inhabitants of Western Europe under the term "Nyemtsi," which in the language of the educated designates only Germans. The rest of humanity is composed of Pravoslavniye (Greek Orthodox), Busurmanye (Mahometans), and Poliacki (Poles).

the Germans, but they won't do for us. How are our little horses to drag these big ploughs and harrows? And as for that (the threshing-machine), it's of no use." Further examination and reflection confirmed this first impression, and it was unanimously decided that no good would come of the new-fangled inventions.

These apprehensions proved to be only too well founded. The ploughs and harrows were much too heavy for the peasants' small horses, and the threshing-machine broke down at the first attempt to use it. For the purchase of lighter implements or stronger horses there was no ready money, and for the repairing of the threshing-machine there was not an engineer within a radius of a hundred and fifty miles. The experiment was, in short, a complete failure, and the new purchases were put away out of sight.

For some weeks after this incident Victor Alexandr'itch felt very despondent, and spoke more than usual about the apathy and stupidity of the peasantry. His faith in infallible science was somewhat shaken, and his benevolent aspirations were for a time laid aside. But this eclipse of faith was not of long duration. Gradually he recovered his normal condition, and began to form new schemes. From the study of certain works on political economy he learned that the system of communal property was ruinous to the fertility of the soil, and that free labour was always more productive than serfage. By the light of these principles he discovered why the peasantry in Russia were so poor, and by what means their condition could

be ameliorated. The communal land should be divided into family lots, and the serfs, instead of being forced to work for the proprietor, should pay a yearly sum as rent. The advantages of this change he perceived clearly—as clearly as he had formerly perceived the advantages of English agricultural implements—and he determined to make the experiment on his own estate.

His first step was to call together the more intelligent and influential of his serfs, and to explain to them his project; but his efforts at explanation were eminently unsuccessful. Even with regard to ordinary current affairs he could not express himself in that simple, homely language with which alone the peasants are familiar, and when he spoke on abstract subjects he naturally became quite unintelligible to his uneducated audience. The serfs listened attentively, but understood nothing. He might as well have spoken to them, as he often did in another kind of society, about the comparative excellence of Italian and German music. At a second attempt he was rather more successful. The peasants came to understand that what he wished was to break up the "Mir," or rural commune, and to put them all "on Obrok"—that is to say, make them pay a yearly sum instead of giving him a certain amount of agricultural labour. Much to his astonishment, his scheme did not meet with any sympathy. As to being put "on Obrok," the serfs did not much object, though they preferred to remain as they were; but his proposal to break up the "Mir" fairly astonished and bewildered them. They regarded

it as a sea-captain might regard the proposal of a scientific wiseacre to knock a hole in the ship's bottom in order to make her sail faster. Though they did not say much, he was intelligent enough to see that they would offer a strenuous, passive opposition, and as he did not wish to act tyrannically, he let the matter drop. Thus a second benevolent scheme was shipwrecked. Many other schemes had a similar fate, and Victor Alexandr'itch began to perceive that it was very difficult to do good in this world, especially when the persons to be benefited were Russian peasants.

In reality the fault lay less with the serfs than with their master. Victor Alexandr'itch was by no means a stupid man. On the contrary, he had more than average talents. Few men were more capable of grasping a new idea and forming a scheme for its realisation, and few men could play more dexterously with abstract principles. What he wanted was the power of dealing with concrete facts. The principles which he had acquired from University lectures and desultory reading were far too vague and abstract for practical use. He had studied abstract science without gaining any technical knowledge of details, and consequently when he stood face to face with real life he was like a student who, having studied mechanics in text-books, is suddenly placed in a workshop and ordered to construct a machine. Only there was one difference: Victor Alexandr'itch was not ordered to do anything. Voluntarily, without any apparent necessity, he set himself to work

with tools which he could not handle. It was this that chiefly puzzled the peasants. Why should he trouble himself with these new schemes, when he might live comfortably as he was? In some of his projects they could detect a desire to increase the revenue, but in others they could discover no such motive. In these latter they attributed his conduct to pure caprice, and put it into the same category as those mad pranks in which proprietors of jovial humour sometimes indulged.

In the last years of serfage there were a good many landed proprietors like Victor Alexandr'itch—men who wished to do something beneficent, and did not know how to do it. When serfage was being abolished the majority of these men took an active part in the great work and rendered valuable service to their country. Victor Alexandr'itch acted otherwise. At first he sympathised warmly with the proposed emancipation and wrote several articles on the advantages of free labour, but when the Government took the matter into its own hands he declared that the officials had deceived and slighted the noblesse, and he went over to the opposition. Before the Imperial Edict was signed he went abroad, and travelled for three years in Germany, France, and Italy. Shortly after his return he married a pretty, accomplished young lady, the daughter of an eminent official in St. Petersburg, and since that time he has lived in his country-house.

Though a man of education and culture, Victor

Alexandr'itch spends his time in almost as indolent a way as the men of the old school. He rises somewhat later, and instead of sitting by the open window and gazing into the courtyard, he turns over the pages of a book or periodical. Instead of dining at mid-day and supping at nine o'clock, he takes *déjeûner* at twelve and dines at five. He spends less time in sitting in the verandah and pacing up and down with his hands behind his back, for he can vary the operation of time-killing by occasionally writing a letter, or by standing behind his wife at the piano while she plays selections from Mozart and Beethoven. But these peculiarities are merely variations in detail. If there is any essential difference between the lives of Victor Alexandr'itch and of Ivan Ivan'itch, it is in the fact that the former never goes out into the fields to see how the work is done, and never troubles himself with the state of the weather, the condition of the crops, and cognate subjects. He leaves the management of his estate entirely to his steward, and refers to that personage all peasants who come to him with complaints or petitions. Though he takes a deep interest in the peasant as an impersonal, abstract entity, and loves to contemplate concrete examples of the genus in the works of certain popular authors, he does not like to have any direct relations with peasants in the flesh. If he has to speak with them he always feels awkward, and suffers from the odour of their sheep-skins. Ivan Ivan'itch is ever ready to talk with the peasants, and give them sound, practical advice, or severe admonitions; and in the old times

he was apt, in moments of irritation, to supplement his admonitions by a free use of his fists. Victor Alexandr'itch, on the contrary, never could give any advice except vague common-place, and as to using his fist, he would have shrunk from that, not only from respect to humanitarian principles, but also from motives which belong to the region of æsthetic sensitiveness.

This difference between the two men has an important influence on their pecuniary affairs. The stewards of both steal from their masters, but that of Ivan Ivan'itch steals with difficulty, and to a very limited extent, whereas that of Victor Alexandr'itch steals regularly and methodically, and counts his gains, not by kopeks, but by roubles. Though the two estates are of about the same size and value, they give a very different revenue. The rough, practical man has a much larger income than his elegant, well-educated neighbour, and at the same time spends very much less. The consequences of this, if not at present visible, must soon become painfully apparent. Ivan Ivan'itch will doubtless leave to his children an unencumbered estate and a certain amount of capital. The children of Victor Alexandr'itch have a different prospect. He has already begun to mortgage his property and to cut down the timber, and he always finds a deficit at the end of the year. What will become of his wife and children when the estate comes to be sold for payment of the mortgage, it is difficult to predict. He thinks very little of that eventuality, and when his thoughts happen to

wander in that direction, he consoles himself with the thought that before the crash comes he will have inherited a fortune from a rich uncle who has no children. He knows very well — or at least might know, if he took the trouble to think—that this calculation is founded on mere possibilities. The uncle may still marry, and have children, or he may choose some other nephew as his heir, or he may simply live on and enjoy his fortune for thirty years to come. The chances, therefore, are very uncertain; but Victor Alexandr'itch, like other improvident people, likes to think that there must be somewhere behind the scenes a beneficent *Deus ex machina*, that will doubtless appear at the proper moment, and miraculously rescue him from the natural consequences of his folly.

The proprietors of the old school lead the same uniform, monotonous life year after year, with very little variation. Victor Alexandr'itch, on the contrary, feels the need of a periodical return to "civilised society," and accordingly spends a few weeks every winter in St Petersburg. During the summer months he has the society of his brother—*un homme tout-à-fait civilisé*—who possesses an estate a few miles off.

This brother, Vladimir Alexandr'itch, was educated in the School of Law in St. Petersburg, and has since risen rapidly in the service. He holds now a prominent position in one of the ministries, and has the honorary court title of "Chambellan de sa Majesté." He is a marked man in the higher circles of the administration, and will, it is thought, some day become minister.

Though an adherent of enlightened views, and a professed "Liberal," he contrives to keep on very good terms with those who imagine themselves to be "Conservatives." In this he is assisted by his soft, oily manner. If you express an opinion to him he will always begin by telling you that you are quite right; and if he ends by showing you that you are quite wrong, he will at least make you feel that your error is not only excusable, but in some way highly creditable to your intellectual acuteness or goodness of heart. In spite of his liberalism he is a staunch monarchist, and considers that the time has not yet come for the Emperor to grant a constitution. He recognises that the present order of things has its defects, but thinks that, on the whole, it acts very well, and would act much better if certain high officials were removed, and more energetic men put in their places. Like all genuine St. Petersburg Tchinovniks (officials) he has great faith in the miraculous power of Imperial ukazes and ministerial circulars, and believes that national progress consists in multiplying these documents, and centralising the administration, so as to give them more effect. As a supplementary means of progress he highly approves of æsthetic culture, and he can speak with some eloquence of the humanising influence of the fine arts. For his own part he is well acquainted with French and English classics, and particularly admires Macaulay, whom he declares to have been not only a great writer, but also a great statesman. Among writers of fiction he gives the palm to George Eliot, and speaks of the novelists of his own country,

and, indeed, of Russian literature as a whole, in the most disparaging terms.

A very different estimate of Russian literature is held by Alexander Ivan'itch N——, formerly arbiter in peasant affairs, and now justice of the peace. Discussions on this subject often take place between the two. The admirer of Macaulay declares that Russia has, properly speaking, no literature whatever, and that the works which bear the names of Russian authors are nothing but a feeble echo of the literature of Western Europe. "Imitators," he is wont to say, "skilful imitators, we have produced in abundance. But where is there a man of original genius? What is our famous poet Zhukófski? A translator. What is Pushkin? A clever pupil of the romantic school. What is Lérmontof? A feeble imitator of Byron. What is Gógol?"

At this point Alexander Ivan'itch invariably intervenes. He is ready to sacrifice all the pseudo-classic and romantic poetry, and, in fact, the whole of Russian literature anterior to about the year 1840, but he will not allow anything disrespectful to be said of Gógol, who about that time founded the Russian realistic school. "Gógol," he holds, "was a great and original genius. Gógol not only created a new kind of literature; he at the same time transformed the reading public, and inaugurated a new era in the intellectual development of the nation. By his humorous, satirical sketches he swept away the metaphysical dreaming and foolish romantic affectation then in fashion, and taught men to see their country as it was, in all its hideous ugliness.

With his help the young generation perceived the rottenness of the administration, and the meanness, stupidity, dishonesty, and worthlessness of the landed proprietors, whom he made the special butt of his ridicule. The recognition of defects produced a desire for reform. From laughing at the proprietors there was but one step to despising them, and when we learned to despise the proprietors we naturally came to sympathise with the serfs. Thus the emancipation was prepared by the literature; and when the great question had to be solved, it was the literature that discovered a satisfactory solution."

This is a subject on which Alexander Ivan'itch feels very strongly, and on which he always speaks with warmth. He knows a good deal regarding the intellectual movement which began about 1840, and culminated in the great reforms of the present reign, because he lived in it and took a certain active part in it. He can dimly remember the sensation caused by the publication of Gógol's famous description of Russian provincial life. He can remember how, a few years later, he entered the University of Moscow, and attended the brilliant historical lectures of Granófski. At that time the literary society of Moscow was divided into two hostile camps—the Slavophils and the Occidentalists. The former wished to develop an independent national culture, on the foundation of popular conceptions and Greek Orthodoxy, whilst the latter strove to adopt and assimilate the intellectual treasures of Western Europe. His sympathies were with the latter party, and he looked on its leader

Belinski, as the greatest man of the time. He troubled himself very little with serious academic work, but he read with intense interest all the leading periodicals, and gradually arrived at the conviction that art should not be cultivated for its own sake, but should be made subservient to social progress. This belief was confirmed by a perusal of some of George Sand's earlier works, which were for him a kind of revelation. Social questions engrossed his thoughts, and all other subjects seemed puny by comparison. Then came in 1848 the political disturbances in Western Europe—a time of wild hopes and boundless aspirations, followed by a period of violent re-action, during which all reference to political and social questions was rigorously prohibited by the Press-censure. This period Alexander Ivan'itch spent in the country, managing his estate and waiting patiently for the advent of a brighter day. And when this brighter day dawned, after the Crimean War, he threw himself enthusiastically into the new movement and advocated in various periodicals the abolition of serfage. The Emancipation Manifest was signed in 1861, and shortly afterwards he was appointed one of the "Arbiters of the Peace" in the district where he lived. The duty of these arbiters was to put the Emancipation Law into execution, and to act as mediators between the landed proprietors and their serfs. This was for him thoroughly congenial work, and he executed it with such impartiality and judgment that on all the estates for which he acted as arbiter there were no serious quarrels or misunderstandings. In 1867 he was elected a justice of the peace by the Zemstvo

Assembly, and fulfils his new duties with equal ability. He is at the same time a deputy of the Assembly, and takes a lively interest in all local affairs.

Though he visits occasionally the great St. Petersburg official, when that personage honours the district with his presence, he does not profess to have towards him any sentiments of friendship or respect. On the contrary, he declares him to be a walking incarnation of bureaucracy, and proclaims bureaucracy to be the great bane of Russia. "These Tchinovniks," he is wont to say in moments of excitement, "who live in St. Petersburg and govern the country, know about as much of Russia as they do of China. They live in a world of official documents, and know nothing of the real wants and interests of the people. So long as all the required formalities are duly observed they are perfectly satisfied. The people may be allowed to die of starvation if only the fact do not appear in the official reports. Powerless to do any good themselves, they are powerful enough to prevent others, and are extremely jealous of all private initiative. How have they acted, for instance, towards the Zemstvo? The Zemstvo is really a good institution, and might have done great things if it had been left alone, but as soon as it began to show a little independent energy the officials at once clipped its wings and then strangled it. Towards the Press they have acted in the same way. They are afraid of the Press, because they fear above all things a healthy public opinion, which the Press alone can create. Everything that disturbs the habitual routine alarms them. Russia cannot make

any real progress so long as she is ruled by these cursed Tchinovniks!"

The amiable brother of the great official fares no better at the hands of the liberal justice of the peace. He is not a Tchinovnik, but he is something almost as bad—a "baritch," that is to say a pampered, capricious, spoiled child, whose life is spent in elegant indolence and fine talking. In spite of his generous aspirations he never succeeds in doing anything useful to himself or to others. When the peasant question was raised and there was work to be done, he went abroad and talked liberalism in Paris and Baden-Baden. Though he reads, or at least professes to read, books on agriculture, and is always ready to discourse on the best means of preventing the exhaustion of the soil, he knows less of farming than a peasant-boy of twelve, and when he goes into the fields he can hardly distinguish rye from oats. Instead of babbling about German and Italian music, he would do well to learn a little about practical farming, and look after his estate.

Whilst the justice of the peace thus censures readily his neighbours, he is himself not without detractors. Some staid old proprietors regard him as a dangerous man, and can quote certain expressions of his which seem to indicate that his notions of property are somewhat loose. Many consider that his liberalism is of a very violent kind, and that he has strong republican sympathies. In his decisions as Justice he often leans, it is said, to the side of the peasants against the proprietors. Then he is always trying to induce the

peasants of the neighbouring villages to found schools, and he has wonderful ideas about the best method of teaching children. These and similar facts make many people believe that he has very advanced ideas, and one old gentleman habitually calls him—half in joke and half in earnest—"our friend the Communist." At the next elections for justices of the peace it is highly probable that he will be blackballed. Certainly there will be an attempt to prevent his re-election.

In reality Alexander Ivan'itch has nothing of the communist about him. Though he loudly denounces the Tchinovnik spirit—or, as we should say, red-tapeism in all its forms—and is an ardent partisan of local self-government, he is one of the last men in the world to take part in any revolutionary movement. He would like to see the Central Government enlightened and controlled by public opinion and by a national representation, but he believes that this can only be effected by voluntary concessions on the part of the autocratic power. He has, perhaps, a certain sentimental love of the peasantry, and is always ready to advocate its interests; but he has come too much in contact with individual peasants to accept those idealised descriptions in which some popular writers indulge, and it may safely be asserted that the accusation of his voluntarily favouring peasants at the expense of proprietors is wholly unfounded. Alexander Ivan'itch is, in fact, a quiet, sensible man, who is capable of generous enthusiasm, and is not at all satisfied with the existing state of things, but he is

not at all a dreamer and a *révolutionnaire*, as some of his neighbours assert.

I am afraid I cannot say as much for his younger brother Nikolaï, who lives with him. Nikolaï Ivan'itch is a tall slender man, rather over thirty years of age, with emaciated face, bilious complexion, and long black hair—evidently a person of excitable, nervous temperament. When he speaks he articulates rapidly, and uses more gesticulation than is common among his countrymen. His favourite subject of conversation, or rather of discourse, for he more frequently preaches than talks, is the lamentable state of the country and the worthlessness of the Government. Against the Government he has a great many causes for complaint, and one or two of a personal kind. In 1861 he was a student in the University of St. Petersburg. At that time there was a great deal of public excitement all over Russia, and especially in the capital. The serfs had just been emancipated, and other important reforms had been undertaken. There was a general conviction among the young generation—and it must be added among many older men—that the autocratic, paternal system of government was at an end, and that Russia was about to be re-organised according to the most advanced principles of political and social science. The students, sharing this conviction, wished to be freed from all academical authority, and to organise a kind of academical self-government. They desired especially the right of holding public meetings for the discussion of their common affairs. The authorities could not allow this, and issued a list of rules

prohibiting meetings and raising the class-fees, so as practically to exclude many of the poorer students. This was felt to be a wanton insult to the spirit of the new era. In spite of the prohibition, indignation meetings were held, and fiery speeches made by male and female orators, first in the class-rooms and afterwards in the courtyard of the University. On one occasion a long procession marched through the principal streets to the house of the Curator. Never had such a spectacle been seen before in St. Petersburg; timid people feared that it was the commencement of an insurrection, and dreamed about barricades. At last the authorities took energetic measures; about 300 students were arrested, and of these, thirty-two were expelled from the University.

Among those who were expelled was Nicolaï Ivan'itch. All his hopes of becoming a professor as he had intended were thereby shipwrecked, and he had to look out for some other profession. A literary career now seemed the most promising, and certainly the most congenial to his tastes. It would enable him to gratify his ambition of being a public man, and give him opportunities of attacking and annoying his persecutors. He had already written occasionally for one of the leading periodicals, and now he became a regular contributor. His stock of positive knowledge was not very large, but he had the power of writing fluently and of making his readers believe that he had an unlimited store of political wisdom which the Press-censure prevented him from publishing. Besides this, he had the talent of

saying sharp, satirical things about those in authority, in such a way that even a Press-censor could not easily raise objections. Articles written in this style were sure at that time to be very successful, and his articles had a very great success. He became a known man in literary circles, and for a time all went well. But gradually he became less cautious, whilst the authorities became more vigilant. Some copies of a violent seditious proclamation fell into the hands of the police, and it was generally believed that the document proceeded from the coterie to which he belonged. From that moment he was carefully watched, till one night he was unexpectedly roused from his sleep by a gendarme and conveyed to the fortress.

When a man is arrested in this way for a real or supposed political offence, there are two modes of dealing with him. He may be tried before a regular tribunal, or he may be dealt with "by administrative procedure" (administrativnym poryadkom). In the former case he will, if convicted, be condemned to imprisonment for a certain term; or if the offence be of a graver nature, he may be transported to Siberia either for a fixed period or for life. By the administrative procedure he is simply removed without a trial to some distant town, and compelled to live there under police supervision during his Majesty's pleasure. Nikolaï Ivan'itch was treated "administratively," because the authorities, though convinced that he was a dangerous character, could not find sufficient evidence to procure his conviction before a court of justice. For five years he lived under police supervision in a small town near the White Sea, and then

one day he was informed, without any explanation, that he might go and live anywhere he pleased except in St. Petersburg and Moscow.

Since that time he has lived with his brother, and spends his time in brooding over his grievances and bewailing his shattered illusions. He has lost none of that fluency which gained him an ephemeral literary reputation, and can speak by the hour on political and social questions to any one who will listen to him. It is extremely difficult, however, to follow his discourses, and utterly impossible to retain them in the memory. They belong to what may be called political metaphysics—for though he professes to hold metaphysics in abhorrence, he is himself a thorough metaphysician in his modes of thought. He lives, indeed, in a world of abstract conceptions, from which he can scarcely perceive concrete facts, and his arguments are always a kind of clever juggling with such equivocal, conventional terms as aristocracy, bourgeoisie, monarchy, and the like. At concrete facts he arrives, not directly by observation, but by deductions from general principles, so that his facts can never by any possibility contradict his theories. Then he has certain axioms which he tacitly assumes, and on which all his arguments are based; as, for instance, that everything to which the term "liberal" can be applied must necessarily be good at all times and under all conditions.

Among a mass of vague conceptions, which it is impossible to reduce to any clearly-defined form, he has a few ideas which are perhaps not strictly true, but which

are at least intelligible. Among these is his conviction that Russia had recently a magnificent opportunity of distancing all Europe on the road of progress, and voluntarily threw away her opportunity. She might, he thinks, at the time of the Emancipation, have boldly accepted all the most advanced principles of political and social science, and have completely re-organised the political and social structure in accordance with them. Other nations could not take such a step, because they are old and decrepit, filled with stubborn, hereditary prejudices, and cursed with an aristocracy and a bourgeoisie; but Russia is young, knows nothing of social castes, and has no deep-rooted prejudices to contend with. The population is like potter's clay, which can be made to assume any form that Science may recommend. The Emperor began a magnificent sociological experiment, but he stopped half-way. Perhaps his successor may be induced to make a bolder attempt.

In this idea there is a certain amount of truth. Russia could accomplish political and social evolutions which would prove fatal to more delicately organised States. She has already more than once accomplished such evolutions successfully, without any serious disturbances, and she may accomplish others in the future, *provided the Autocratic Power is preserved, and the people remain politically passive.* This very important condition Nikolaï Ivan'itch fails to perceive. He is a "Liberal," and as such is a zealous adherent of Parliamentary institutions. For him a constitution is a kind of omnipotent fetish. You may try to explain

to him that a Parliamentary régime, whatever its advantages may be, necessarily produces political parties and political conflicts, and is not nearly so suitable for grand sociological experiments as a good paternal despotism. You may try to convince him that, though it may be difficult to convert an Autocrat, it is infinitely more difficult to convert a Parliament. But all your efforts will be in vain. He will assure you that a Russian Parliament would be something quite different from what Parliaments commonly are. It would contain no parties, for Russia has no social castes, and would be guided entirely by scientific considerations—as free from prejudice and personal influences as a philosopher speculating on the nature of the Infinite! In short, he evidently imagines that a national Parliament would be composed of himself and his friends, and that the nation would calmly submit to their ukazes as it has hitherto submitted to the ukazes of the Tsar.

Pending the advent of this political millennium, when unimpassioned Science is to reign supreme, Nikolaï Ivan'itch allows himself the luxury of indulging in some very decided political animosities, and he hates as only a fanatic can hate. Firstly and chiefly, he hates what he calls the *Bourgeoisie*—he is obliged to use the French word, because his native language does not contain an equivalent term—and especially capitalists of all sorts and dimensions. Next, he hates Aristocracy, especially a form of aristocracy called Feudalism. To these abstract terms he does not attach a very precise meaning, but he hates the entities which

they are supposed to represent, quite as heartily as if they were personal enemies. Among the things which he hates in his own country, the Autocratic power holds the first place. Next, as an emanation from the Autocratic power, come the Tchinovniks, and especially the gendarmes. Then come the landed proprietors. Though he is—or at least will be after his mother's death—himself a landed proprietor, he regards the class as cumberers of the ground, and thinks that all their land should be confiscated and distributed among the peasantry.

All proprietors have the misfortune to come under his sweeping denunciations, because they are inconsistent with his ideal of a peasant Empire, but he recognises amongst them degrees of depravity. Some are simply obstructive, whilst others are actively prejudicial to the public welfare. Among these latter a special object of aversion is Prince S——, because he not only possesses very large estates, but at the same time has aristocratic pretensions, and calls himself a Conservative.

Prince S—— is by far the most important man in the district. His family is one of the oldest in the country —being descended from no less a personage than Rurik, who is supposed to have founded the Russian Empire a thousand years ago—but he does not owe his influence to his pedigree, for pedigree pure and simple does not count for much in Russia. He is influential and respected, because he holds a high official position, and belongs by birth to that group of families which form the permanent nucleus of the ever-changing

Court society. His father and grandfather were important personages in the Administration and at Court, and his sons and grandsons will probably in this respect follow in the footsteps of their ancestors. Though in the eye of the law all nobles are equal, and, theoretically speaking, promotion is gained exclusively by personal merit, yet, in reality, those who have friends at Court rise more easily and more rapidly.

The Prince has had a prosperous but not very eventful life. He was educated, first at home, under an English tutor, and afterwards in the "Corps des Pages." On leaving this institution he entered a regiment of the Guards, and has since steadily risen to high military rank. His activity, however, has been chiefly in the civil administration, and he now has a seat in the Council of State. Though he has always taken a certain interest in public affairs, he did not play an important part in any of the great reforms of the present reign. When the peasant question was raised he sympathised with the idea of Emancipation, but did not at all sympathise with the idea of giving land to the emancipated serfs and preserving the communal institutions. What he desired was that the proprietors should liberate their serfs without any pecuniary indemnity, and should receive in return a certain share of political power. His scheme was not adopted, but he has not relinquished the hope that the great landed proprietors may somehow obtain a social and political position similar to that of the great landowners in England; and he thinks that this might be in part

accomplished by putting into their hands the local administration in rural affairs. He does not wish, however, that the great landowners should in return bear a large part of the local rates, and he overlooks the fact that they would have to change their character and learn to prefer local influence to high official position and Imperial favour.

Official duties and social relations compel the Prince to spend a large part of the year in the capital. He spends only a few weeks yearly on his estate—sometimes only a few days. The house is large, and fitted up in the English style, with a view to combining elegance and comfort. It contains several spacious apartments, a library, and a billiard-room. There is an extensive park with a score of fallow-deer, an immense garden with hot-houses, numerous horses and carriages, and a legion of servants. When the family arrive they bring with them an English and French governess and an English tutor for the children. There is always a regular supply of English and French books, newspapers, and periodicals, and the *Journal de St. Pétersbourg*, which gives the news of the day. Russian books and newspapers could easily be obtained if any one desired them. The family have, in short, all the conveniences and comforts which money and refinement can procure, but it cannot be said that they greatly enjoy the time spent in the country. The Princess has no decided objection to it. She is devoted to her children, is fond of reading and correspondence, amuses herself with a school and hospital which she has founded for

the peasantry, and occasionally drives over to see her friend, the Countess N——, who lives about fifteen miles off. But the Prince finds country life excessively dull. He does not care for riding or shooting, and he finds nothing else to do. He knows nothing about the management of his estate, and holds consultations with the steward merely *pro forma*—this estate, and the others which he possesses in different provinces, being ruled by a head-steward in St. Petersburg, in whom he has the most complete confidence. In the vicinity there is no one with whom he cares to associate. Naturally he is not a sociable man, and he has acquired a stiff, formal, reserved manner that is common in England, but rarely to be met with in Russia. This manner repels the neighbouring proprietors—a fact that he does not at all regret, for they do not belong to his *monde*, and they have in their manners and habits a free-and-easy rusticity which is positively disagreeable to him. His relations with them are therefore confined to formal calls. The greater part of the day he spends in listless loitering, frequently yawning, regretting the pleasant routine of St. Petersburg life—the pleasant chats with his colleagues, the opera, the ballet, the French theatre, and the quiet rubber at the "Club Anglais." His spirits rise as the day of his departure approaches, and when he drives off to the station he looks bright and cheerful. If he consulted merely his own tastes he would never visit his estates at all, and would spend his summer holidays in Germany, France, or Switzerland, as he did in his bachelor days; but he is now father of a

family, and considers it right to sacrifice his personal inclinations to the duties of his position.

The Prince belongs to the highest rank of the Russian Noblesse. If we wish to get an idea of the lowest rank we have merely to go to the neighbouring village. There we shall find a number of poor, uneducated men, who live in small, squalid houses, and are not easily to be distinguished from peasants. They are nobles, like the Prince; but, unlike him, they have neither official rank nor large fortune, and their landed property consists of a few acres of poor land, which barely supplies them with the first necessaries of life. If we went to other parts of the country we might find men in this condition bearing the title of prince! This is the natural result of the Russian law of inheritance, which does not recognise the principle of primogeniture with regard to titles and estates. All the sons of a prince are princes, and at his death his property, movable and immovable, is divided equally amongst them all.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE NOBLESSE.

The Nobles in Early Times—The Tartar Domination—The Tsardom of Muscovy—Family Dignity—Reforms of Peter the Great—The Nobles adopt West-European Conceptions—Abolition of Obligatory Service—Influence of Catherine II.—The Russian Dvoryánstvo compared with the French Noblesse and the English Aristocracy—Russian Titles—Probable Future of the Russian Noblesse.

Now that the reader has made the acquaintance of some Russian nobles, he may perhaps desire to know something of the Noblesse* as a class—something of its past history and present condition.

In the old times, when Russia was merely a collection of independent principalities, each reigning prince was surrounded by a group of armed men, composed partly of Boyárs, or large landed proprietors, and partly of knights, or soldiers of fortune. These men, who formed the Noblesse of the time, were to a certain extent under the authority of the Prince, but they were by no means mere obedient, silent executors of his will. The Boyárs might refuse to take part in his military expeditions, and the "free lances" might leave his service and seek employment elsewhere. If he wished to go to war without their consent, they could say to him, as they

* I use here a foreign, in preference to an English, term, because the word "Nobility" would convey an utterly false impression. Etymologically the Russian word "Dvoryanin" means a Courtier (from Dvor = court); but this term is equally objectionable, because the great majority of the Dvoryánstvo have nothing to do with the Court.

did on one occasion, "You have planned this yourself, Prince, so we will not go with you, for we knew nothing of it." Nor was this resistance to the princely will always merely passive. Once, in the principality of Galitch, the armed men seized their prince, killed his favourites, burned his mistress, and made him swear that he would in future live with his lawful wife. To his successor, who had married the wife of a priest, they spoke thus: "We have not risen against you, Prince, but we will not do reverence to a priest's wife: we will put her to death, and then you may marry whom you please." Even the energetic Bogolubski, one of the most remarkable of the old princes, did not succeed in having his own way. When he attempted to force the Boyars he met with stubborn opposition, and was finally assassinated. From these incidents, which might be indefinitely multiplied from the old chronicles, we see that in the early period of Russian history the Boyars and knights were a body of free men, possessing a considerable amount of political power.

Under the Tartar domination this political equilibrium was destroyed. When the country had been conquered, the princes became servile vassals of the Khan, and arbitrary rulers towards their own subjects. The political significance of the nobles was thereby greatly diminished. It was not, however, by any means annihilated. Though the prince no longer depended entirely on their support, he had an interest in retaining their services, to protect his territory in case of sudden attack,

or to increase his possessions at the expense of his neighbours when a convenient opportunity presented itself. Theoretically such conquests were impossible, for all removing of the ancient landmarks depended on the decision of the Khan; but in reality the Khan paid little attention to the affairs of his vassals, so long as somebody paid the tribute; and much took place in Russia without his permission. We find, therefore, in some of the principalities the old relations still subsisting under Tartar rule. The famous Dmitri of the Don, for instance, when on his death-bed, speaks thus to his Boyars: "You know my habits and my character; I was born among you, grew up among you, governed with you—fighting by your side, showing you honour and love, and placing you over towns and districts. I loved your children, and did evil to no one. I rejoiced with you in your joy, mourned with you in your grief, and called you the princes of my land." Then, turning to his children, he adds, as a parting advice: "Love your Boyars, my children; show them the honour which their services merit, and undertake nothing without their consent."

When the Grand Princes of Moscow brought the other principalities under their power, and formed them into the Tsardom of Muscovy, the nobles descended another step in the political scale. So long as there were many principalities they could quit the service of a prince, as soon as he gave them reason to be discontented, knowing that they would be well received by one of his rivals; but now they had no longer

any choice. The only rival of Moscow was Lithuania, and precautions were taken to prevent the discontented from crossing the Lithuanian frontier. The nobles were no longer voluntary adherents of a prince, but had become subjects of a Tsar; and the Tsars were not as the old princes had been. By a violent legal fiction they conceived themselves to be the successors of the Byzantine Emperors, and created a new court ceremonial, borrowed partly from Constantinople and partly from the Tartar Horde. They no longer associated familiarly with the Boyars, and no longer asked their advice, but treated them rather as menials. When the nobles entered their august master's presence they prostrated themselves in Oriental fashion—occasionally as many as thirty times—and when they incurred his displeasure they were summarily flogged or executed, according to the Tsar's good pleasure. In succeeding to the power of the Khans, the Tsars had adopted, we see, a good deal of the Tartar system of government.

It may seem strange that a class of men, which had formerly shown a proud spirit of independence, should have submitted quietly to such humiliation and oppression without making a serious effort to curb the new power, which had no Tartar hordes at its back to quell opposition. But we must remember that the nobles, as well as the princes, had passed in the meantime through the school of the Tartar domination. In the course of two centuries they had gradually become accustomed to despotic rule in the Oriental sense. If they felt their position humiliating and irksome, they must have felt,

too, how difficult it was to better it. Their only resource lay in combining against the common oppressor; and we have only to glance at the motley, disorganised group, as they cluster round the Tsar, to perceive that combination was impossible. We can distinguish there the mediatised princes, still harbouring designs for the recovery of their independence; the Moscow Boyars, jealous of their family honour and proud of Muscovite supremacy; Tartar Murzi, who have submitted to be baptised and have received land like the other nobles; the Novgorodian magnate, who cannot forget the ancient glory of his native city; Lithuanian nobles, who find it more profitable to serve the Tsar than their own sovereign; petty chiefs, who have fled from the oppression of the Teutonic order; and many soldiers of fortune from every part of the Russian land. Strong, permanent political factors are not easily formed out of such heterogeneous material.

At the end of the sixteenth century the old dynasty became extinct, and after a short period of political anarchy, commonly called "the troublous times" (smútnoe vrémya), the Románof family were raised to the throne by the will of the people, or at least by those who were assumed to be its representatives. By this change the Noblesse acquired a somewhat better position. They were no longer exposed to capricious tyranny and barbarous cruelty, such as they had experienced at the hands of Ivan the Terrible, but they did not, as a class, gain any political influence. There were still rival families and rival factions, but there were no political

parties in the proper sense of the term, and the highest aim of families and factions was to gain the favour of the Tsar.

The frequent quarrels about precedence which took place among the rival families at this period form one of the most curious episodes of Russian history. The old patriarchal conception of the family as a unit one and indivisible was still so strong among these men, that the elevation or degradation of one member of a family was considered to affect deeply the honour of all the other members. Each noble family had its rank in a recognised scale of dignity, according to the rank which it held, or had previously held, in the service of the Tsar; and a whole family would have considered itself dishonoured if one of its members accepted a post lower than that to which he was entitled. Whenever a vacant place in the service was filled up, the subordinates of the successful candidate examined the official records and the genealogical trees of their families, in order to discover whether some ancestor of their new superior had not served under one of their own ancestors. If the subordinate found such a case, he complained to the Tsar that it was not becoming for him to serve under a man who had less family honour than himself. Unfounded complaints of this kind often entailed imprisonment or corporal punishment, but in spite of these severe measures the quarrels for precedence were very frequent. At the commencement of a campaign many such disputes were sure to arise, and the Tsar's decision was not always accepted by the party who considered himself aggrieved.

I have met at least with one example of a great dignitary voluntarily mutilating his hand in order to escape the necessity of serving under a man whom he considered his inferior in family dignity. Even at the Tsar's table these rivalries sometimes produced unseemly incidents, for it was almost impossible to arrange the places so as to satisfy all the guests. In one recorded instance a noble who received a place lower than that to which he considered himself entitled, openly declared to the Tsar that he would rather be condemned to death than submit to such an indignity. In another instance of a similar kind the refractory guest was put on his chair by force, but saved his family honour by slipping under the table!

The next transformation of the Noblesse was effected by Peter the Great. Peter was by nature and position an autocrat, and could brook no opposition. Having set before himself a great aim, he sought everywhere obedient, intelligent, energetic instruments to carry out his designs. He himself served the State zealously—as a common artisan, when he considered it necessary—and he insisted on all his subjects doing likewise, under pain of merciless punishment. To noble birth and long pedigrees he habitually showed a most democratic, or rather autocratic, indifference. Intent on obtaining the service of living men, he paid no attention to the claims of dead ancestors, and gave to his servants the pay and honour which their services merited, irrespective of birth or social position. Hence many of his chief coadjutors had no connection with the old Russian families. Count Yaguzhinski, who long held one of the most important

posts in the State, was the son of a poor sacristan; Count Devier was a Portuguese by birth, and had been a cabin-boy; Baron Shafirof was a Jew; Hannibal, who died with the rank of Commander-in-Chief, was a negro who had been bought in Constantinople; and his Serene Highness Prince Ménshikof had begun life, it was said, as a baker's apprentice! For the future, noble birth was to count for nothing. The service of the State was thrown open to men of all ranks, and personal merit was to be the only claim to promotion.

This must have seemed to the Conservatives of the time a most revolutionary and reprehensible proceeding, but it did not satisfy the reforming tendencies of the great autocrat. He went a step further, and entirely changed the legal status of the Noblesse. Down to his time the nobles were free to serve or not as they chose, and those who chose to serve enjoyed land on what we should call a feudal tenure. Some served permanently in the military or civil administration, but by far the greater number lived on their estates, and entered the active service merely when the militia was called out in view of war. This system was completely changed when Peter created a large standing army and a great centralised bureaucracy. By one of those "fell swoops" which periodically occur in Russian history, he changed the feudal into freehold tenures, and laid down the principle that all nobles, whatever their landed possessions might be, should serve the State in the Army, the Fleet, or the Civil Administration, from boyhood to old age. In accordance with this principle, any noble who refused

to serve was not only deprived of his estate, as in the old times, but was declared to be a traitor and might be condemned to capital punishment.

The nobles were thus transformed into servants of the State, and the State in the time of Peter was a hard taskmaster. They complained bitterly and with reason that they had been deprived of their ancient rights and were compelled to accept quietly and uncomplainingly whatever burdens their master chose to place upon them. "Though our country," they said, "is in no danger of invasion, no sooner is peace concluded than plans are laid for a new war, which has generally no other foundation than the ambition of the Sovereign, or perhaps merely the ambition of one of his ministers. To please him our peasants are utterly exhausted, and we ourselves are forced to leave our homes and families, not as formerly for a single campaign, but for long years. We are compelled to contract debts and to entrust our estates to thieving overseers, who commonly reduce them to such a condition, that when we are allowed to retire from the service, in consequence of old age or illness, we cannot to the end of our lives retrieve our prosperity. In a word, we are so exhausted and ruined by the keeping up of a standing army, and by the consequences flowing therefrom, that the most cruel enemy, though he should devastate the whole Empire, could not cause us one half of the injury." *

* These complaints have been preserved by Vockerodt, a Prussian diplomatic agent of the time.

This Spartan régime, which ruthlessly sacrificed private interests to considerations of State policy, could not long be maintained in its pristine severity. It undermined its own foundations by demanding too much. Draconian laws threatening confiscation and capital punishment were of little avail. Nobles became monks, inscribed themselves as merchants, or engaged themselves as domestic servants, in order to escape their obligations. "Some," says a contemporary, "grow old in disobedience and have never once appeared in active service. . . . There is, for instance, Theodore Mokeyef. . . . In spite of the strict orders sent regarding him no one could ever catch him. Some of those sent to take him he belaboured with blows, and when he could not beat the messengers, he pretended to be dangerously ill, or feigned idiocy, and running into the pond stood in the water up to his neck; but as soon as the messengers were out of sight he returned home and roared like a lion."*

After Peter's death the system was gradually relaxed, but the Noblesse could not be satisfied by partial concessions. Russia had in the meantime moved, as it were, out of Asia into Europe, and had become one of the great European Powers. The upper classes had been gradually learning something of the fashions, the literature, the institutions, and the moral conceptions of Western Europe, and the nobles naturally compared the class to which they belonged with the aristocracies of Germany and France. For those who

* Posóshkof, "O skúdosti i bogátstvê."

were influenced by the new foreign ideas the comparison was humiliating. In the West the Noblesse was a free and privileged class, proud of its liberty, its rights, and its culture; whereas in Russia the nobles were servants of the State, without privileges, without dignity, subjected to corporal punishment, and burdened with onerous duties from which there was no escape. Thus arose in that section of the Noblesse which had some acquaintance with Western civilisation a feeling of dissatisfaction with its actual position, and a desire to gain a social position similar to that of the nobles in France and Germany. These aspirations were in part realised by Peter III., who, in 1762, abolished the principle of obligatory service. His consort, Catherine II., went much further in the same direction, and inaugurated a new epoch in the history of the Dvoryánstvo, a period in which its duties and obligations fell into the background and its rights and privileges came to the front.

Catherine had good reason to favour the Noblesse. As a foreigner and a usurper, raised to the throne by a Court conspiracy, she could not awaken in the masses that semi-religious veneration which the legitimate Tsars have always enjoyed, and consequently she had to seek support in the upper classes, who were less rigid and uncompromising in their conceptions of legitimacy. She confirmed, therefore, the ukaz which abolished obligatory service of the nobles, and sought to gain their voluntary service by honours and rewards. In her manifestoes she always spoke of

them in the most flattering terms, and tried to convince them that the welfare of the country depended on their loyalty and devotion. Though she had no intention of ceding any of her political power, she formed the nobles of each province into a corporation, with periodical assemblies, which were supposed to resemble the French Provincial Parliaments, and entrusted to each of these corporations a large part of the local administration. By these and similar means, aided by her masculine energy and feminine tact, she made herself very popular, and completely changed the old conceptions about the public service. Formerly service had been looked on as a burden; now it came to be looked on as a privilege. Thousands who had retired to their estates after the publication of the liberation edict now flocked back and sought appointments, and this tendency was greatly increased by the brilliant campaigns against the Turks, which excited the patriotic feelings and gave plentiful opportunities of promotion. "Not only landed proprietors," it is said in a comedy of the time,* "but all men, even shopkeepers and cobblers, aim at becoming officers, and the man who has passed his whole life without official rank seems to be not a human being."

And Catherine did more than this. She shared the idea—generally accepted throughout Europe since the brilliant reĭgn of Louis XIV.—that a refined, pomp-loving, pleasure-seeking Court Noblesse was not only the best bulwark of Monarchy, but also a necessary

* Knyazhnina, "Khvastún."

ornament of every highly-civilised state; and as she ardently desired that her country should have the reputation of being highly civilised, she strove to create this national ornament. The love of French civilisation, which already existed among the upper classes of her subjects, here came to her aid, and her efforts in this direction were singularly successful. The Court of St. Petersburg became almost as brilliant, as *galant*, and as frivolous as the Court of Versailles. All who aimed at high honours adopted French fashions, spoke the French language, and affected an unqualified admiration for French classical literature. The courtiers talked of the "point d'honneur," discussed the question as to what was consistent with the dignity of a noble, sought to display "that chivalrous spirit which constitutes the pride and ornament of France;" and looked back with horror on the humiliating position of their fathers and grandfathers. "Peter the Great," writes one of them, "beat all who surrounded him, without distinction of family or rank; but now, many of us would certainly prefer capital punishment to life, after being beaten or flogged, even though the castigation were applied by the sacred hands of the Lord's Anointed."

The tone which reigned in the Court circle of St. Petersburg spread gradually towards the lower ranks of the Dvoryánstvo, and it seemed to superficial observers that a very fair imitation of the French Noblesse had been produced, but in reality the copy was very unlike the model. The Russian *Dvoryanin* easily learned the language and assumed the manners of the French

gentilhomme, and succeeded in changing his physical and intellectual exterior; but all those deeper and more delicate parts of human nature, which are formed by the accumulated experience of past generations, could not be so easily and rapidly changed. The French gentilhomme was the direct descendant of the feudal baron, with the fundamental conceptions of his ancestors deeply embedded in his nature. He had not, indeed, the old haughty bearing towards the Sovereign, and his language was tinged with the fashionable democratic philosophy of the time; but he possessed a large intellectual and moral inheritance that had come down to him directly from the palmy days of feudalism—an inheritance which even the Great Revolution, which was then preparing, could not annihilate. The Russian noble, on the contrary, had received from his ancestors entirely different traditions. His father and grandfather had been conscious of the burdens rather than the privileges of the class to which they belonged. They had considered it no disgrace to receive corporal punishment, and had been jealous of their honour, not as gentlemen or descendants of Boyars, but as Brigadiers, College Assessors, or Privy Counsellors. Their dignity had rested not on the grace of God, but on the will of the Tsar. Under these circumstances even the proudest magnate of Catherine's Court, though he might speak French more fluently than his mother-tongue, could not be very deeply penetrated with the conception of noble blood, the sacred character of nobility, and the numerous feudal ideas interwoven with these conceptions. And in adopting the outward forms of a

foreign culture the nobles did not, it seems, gain much in true dignity. "The old pride of the nobles has fallen!" exclaims one who had more genuine aristocratic feeling than his fellows.* "There are no longer any honourable families, but merely official rank and personal merits. All seek official rank, and as all cannot render direct services, distinctions are sought by every possible means—by flattering the Monarch and toadying the important personages." There was considerable truth in this complaint, but the voice of this solitary aristocrat was as of one crying in the wilderness. The whole of the educated classes—men of old family and *parvenus* alike—were, with few exceptions, too much engrossed with place-hunting to attend to such sentimental wailing.

If the Russian Noblesse was thus in its new form but a very imperfect imitation of its French model, it was still more unlike the English aristocracy. Notwithstanding the liberal phrases in which Catherine habitually indulged, she never had the least intention of ceding one jot or tittle of her autocratic power, and the Noblesse as a class never obtained even a shadow of political influence. There was no real independence under the new airs of dignity and hauteur. In all their acts and openly expressed opinions the courtiers were guided by the real or supposed wishes of the Sovereign, and much of their political sagacity was employed in endeavouring to discover what would please her. "People never talk politics in the salons," says a contemporary witness,† "not even

* Prince Shtcherbâtof.

† Ségur, long Ambassador of France at the Court of Catherine.

to praise the Government. Fear has produced habits of prudence, and the Frondeurs of the Capital express their opinions only in the confidence of intimate friendship or in a relationship still more confidential. Those who cannot bear this constraint retire to Moscow, which cannot be called the centre of opposition, for there is no such thing as opposition in a country with an autocratic government, but which is the capital of the discontented." And even there the discontent did not venture to show itself in the Imperial presence. "In Moscow," says another witness, accustomed to the obsequiousness of Versailles, "you might believe yourself to be among republicans who have just thrown off the yoke of a tyrant, but as soon as the Court arrives you see nothing but abject slaves." *

Though thus excluded from direct influence in political affairs the Noblesse might still have acquired a certain political significance in the State, by means of the Provincial Assemblies, and by the part they took in local administration; but in reality they had neither the requisite political experience, nor the requisite patience, nor even the desire to pursue such a policy. The majority of the proprietors preferred the chances of promotion in the Imperial service to the tranquil life of a country gentleman; and those who resided permanently on their estates showed indifference or positive antipathy to everything connected with the local administration. What was officially described as "a privilege conferred on the nobles for their fidelity, and for the generous sacrifice of

* Sabathier de Cabres, "Catherine II. et la Cour de Russia en 1772."

their lives in their country's cause," was regarded by those who enjoyed it as a new kind of obligatory service —an obligation to supply judges and officers of rural police!

If we require any additional proof that the nobles amidst all these changes were still as dependent as ever on the arbitrary will or caprice of the Monarch, we have only to glance at their position in the time of Paul I., the capricious, eccentric, violent son and successor of Catherine. The autobiographical memoirs of the time depict in vivid colours the humiliating position of even the leading men in the State, in constant fear of exciting by act, word, or look the wrath of the Sovereign. As we read these contemporary records we seem to have before us a picture of ancient Rome under the most despotic and capricious of her Emperors. Irritated and embittered before his accession to the throne by the haughty demeanour of his mother's favourities, Paul lost no opportunity of showing his contempt for aristocratic pretensions, and of humiliating those who were supposed to harbour them. "Apprenez, Monsieur," he said, angrily, on one occasion to Dumouriez, who had accidentally referred to one of the "considerable" personages of the Court, "Apprenez qu'il n'y a pas de considérable ici, que la personne à laquelle je parle et pendant le temps que je lui parle!" *

From the time of Catherine down to the commencement of the present reign no important change was made

* This saying is often falsely attributed to Nicholas. The anecdote is related by Ségur.

in the legal status of the Noblesse, but a gradual change took place in its social character by the continual influx of Western ideas and Western culture. The exclusively French culture in vogue at the Court of Catherine assumed a more cosmopolitan colouring, and permeated downwards till all who had any pretensions to being *civilisés* spoke French with tolerable fluency and possessed at least a superficial acquaintance with the literature of Western Europe. What chiefly distinguished them in the eye of the law from the other classes was the privilege of possessing "inhabited estates"—that is to say, estates with serfs. By the emancipation of the serfs in 1861 this valuable privilege was abolished, and about one-half of their landed property passed into the hands of the peasantry. By the administrative reforms which have since taken place, any little significance which the provincial corporations may have possessed has been annihilated. Thus, at the present day, the nobles are on a level with the other classes with regard to the right of possessing landed property and the administration of local affairs.

From this rapid sketch the reader will easily perceive that the Russian Noblesse has had a peculiar historical development. In Germany, France, and England the nobles were early formed into a homogeneous organised body by the political conditions in which they were placed. They had to repel the encroaching tendencies of Monarchy on the one hand, and of the Bourgeoisie on the other; and in this long struggle with powerful rivals they instinctively held together and developed a vigorous

esprit de corps. New members penetrated into their ranks, but the number of these intruders was so small that they were rapidly assimilated without modifying the general character or recognised ideals of the class, and without rudely disturbing the fiction of purity of blood. The class thus assumed more and more the nature of a caste with a peculiar intellectual and moral culture, and stoutly defended its position and privileges till the ever-increasing power of the middle classes undermined its influence. Its fate in different countries has been different. In Germany it clung to its feudal traditions, and still preserves its social exclusiveness. In France it was deprived of its political influence by the Monarchy and crushed by the Revolution. In England it moderated its pretensions, allied itself with the middle classes, created under the disguise of constitutional monarchy an aristocratic republic, and conceded inch by inch, as necessity demanded, a share of its political influence to the ally that had helped it to curb the Royal power. Thus the German baron, the French gentilhomme, and the English nobleman represent three distinct, well-marked types; but amidst all their diversities they have much in common. They have all preserved to a greater or less extent a haughty consciousness of innate inextinguishable superiority over the lower orders, together with a more or less carefully disguised dislike for the class which has been, and still is, an aggressive rival.

The Russian Noblesse has not these characteristics. It was formed out of more numerous and more heterogeneous materials, and these materials did not spon-

taneously combine to form an organic whole, but were crushed into a conglomerate mass by the weight of the autocratic power. It never became a semi-independent factor in the State. What rights and privileges it possesses it received from the Monarchy, and consequently it has no deep-rooted jealousy or hatred of the Imperial prerogative. On the other hand, it has never had to struggle with the other social classes, and therefore it harbours towards them no feelings of rivalry or hostility. If we hear a Russian noble speak with indignation of autocracy or with acrimony of the bourgeoisie, we may be sure that these feelings have their source, not in traditional mediæval conceptions, but in principles learned from the modern schools of social and political philosophy. The class to which he belongs has undergone so many transformations that it has no hoary traditions or deep-rooted prejudices, and always willingly adapts itself to existing conditions. Indeed, it may be said in general that it looks more to the future than the past, and is ever ready to accept any new ideas that wear the badge of progress. Its freedom from traditions and prejudices makes it singularly susceptible of generous enthusiasm and capable of vigorous spasmodic action, but calm moral courage and tenacity of purpose are not among its prominent attributes. In a word, we find in it neither the peculiar virtues nor the peculiar vices which are engendered and fostered by an atmosphere of political liberty.

However we may explain the fact, there is no doubt that the Russian Noblesse has little or nothing of what

we call aristocratic feeling—little or nothing of that haughty, domineering, exclusive spirit which we are accustomed to associate with the word Aristocracy. We find plenty of Russians who are proud of their wealth, of their culture, or of their official position, but we scarcely ever find a Russian who is proud of his birth or imagines that the fact of his having a long pedigree gives him any right to political privileges or social consideration. Such ideas appear to the ordinary Russian noble absurd and ridiculous. Hence there is a certain amount of truth in the oft-repeated saying that there is in reality no aristocracy in Russia.

Certainly the Noblesse as a whole cannot be called an aristocracy. If the term is to be used at all, it must be applied to a group of families which cluster around the Court and form the highest ranks of the Noblesse. This social aristocracy contains many old families, but its real basis is official rank and general culture rather than pedigree or blood. The feudal conceptions of noble birth, good family, and the like have been adopted by some of its members, but do not form one of its conspicuous features. Though habitually practising a certain exclusiveness, it has none of those characteristics of a caste which we find in the German *Adel*, and is utterly unable to understand such institutions as *Tafelfähigkeit*, by which a man who has not a pedigree of a certain length is considered unworthy to sit down at a royal table. It takes rather the English aristocracy as its model, and harbours the secret hope of one day obtaining a social and political position similar to that of the nobility and

gentry of England. Though it has no peculiar legal privileges, its actual position in the Administration and at Court gives its members great facilities for advancement in the public service. On the other hand, its semi-bureaucratic character, together with the law and custom of dividing landed property among the children at the death of their parents, deprives it of stability. New men force their way into it by official distinction, whilst many of the old families are compelled by poverty to retire from its ranks. The son of a small proprietor or even of a parish priest may rise to the highest offices of State, whilst the descendants of the half-mythical Rurik may descend to the rank of peasants. It is said that not long ago a certain Prince Krapotkin gained his living as a cabman in St. Petersburg!

It is evident, then, that this social aristocracy must not be confounded with the titled families. Titles do not possess the same value in Russia as in Western Europe. They are very common—because the titled families are numerous, and all the children bear the titles of the parents even while the parents are still alive—and they are by no means always associated with official rank, wealth, social position, or distinction of any kind. There are hundreds of princes and princesses who have not the right to appear at Court, and who would not be admitted into what is called in St. Petersburg *la société*, or indeed into refined society in any country.

The only genuine Russian title is Knyaz, commonly translated "Prince" It is borne by the descendants

of Rurik, of the Lithuanian Prince Ghedimin, and of the Tartar Khans and Murzi officially recognised by the Tsars. Besides these, there are fourteen families who have adopted it by Imperial command during the last two centuries. The titles of count and baron are modern importations, beginning with the time of Peter the Great. From Peter and his successors sixty-seven families have received the title of count and ten that of baron. The latter are all, with two exceptions, of foreign extraction, and are mostly descended from Court Bankers.*

There is a very common idea that Russian nobles are as a rule enormously rich. This is a mistake. The majority of them are poor. At the time of the Emancipation, in 1861, there were 100,247 landed proprietors, and of these, more than 41,000 were possessors of less than twenty-one male serfs — that is to say, were in a condition of poverty. A proprietor who was owner of 500 serfs was not considered as by any means very rich, and yet there were only 3,803 proprietors belonging to that category. There were a few, indeed, whose possessions were enormous. Count Sheremetief, for instance, possessed more than 150,000 male serfs, or in other words more than 300,000 souls; and at the present day Count Orloff-Davydof owns considerably more than half a million of acres. The Demídof family derive colossal revenues from their mines, and the Stróganofs have

* Besides these, there are of course the German counts and barons of the Baltic Provinces, who are Russian subjects.

estates which, if put together, would be sufficient in extent to form a good-sized independent state in Western Europe. The very rich families, however, are not numerous. The lavish expenditure in which Russian nobles often indulge indicates too frequently not large fortune, but simply foolish ostentation and reckless improvidence. Of the present economic position of the proprietors I shall have more to say when I come to speak of serf-emancipation and its consequences.

Perhaps, after having spoken so much about the past history of the Noblesse, I ought to endeavour to cast its horoscope, or at least to say something of its probable future. Though predictions are always hazardous, it is sometimes possible, by tracing the great lines of history in the past, to follow them for a little distance into the future. If it be allowable to apply this method of prediction in the present matter, I should say that the Russian Dvoryánstvo will assimilate with the other classes rather than form itself into an exclusive corporation. Hereditary aristocracies may be preserved—or at least their decomposition may be retarded—where they happen to exist, but it seems that they can no longer be created. In Western Europe there is a large amount of aristocratic sentiment, both in the nobles and in the people, but it exists in spite of, rather than in consequence of, actual social conditions. It is not a product of modern society, but an heirloom that has come down to us from feudal times, when power, wealth, and culture were in the hands of a privileged few. If there ever was in Russia

a period corresponding to the feudal times in Western Europe it has long since been forgotten. There is very little aristocratic sentiment either in the people or in the nobles, and it is difficult to imagine any source from which it could now be derived. More than this, the nobles do not desire to make such an acquisition. In so far as they have any political aspirations they aim at securing the political liberty of the people as a whole, and not at acquiring exclusive rights and privileges for their own class.

In that section which I have called a social aristocracy there are a few individuals who desire to gain exclusive political influence for the class to which they belong, but there is very little chance of their succeeding. If their desires were ever by chance realised, we should probably have a repetition of the scene which occurred in 1730. When in that year some of the great families raised the Duchess of Courland to the throne on condition of her ceding part of her power to a supreme council, the lower ranks of the Noblesse compelled her to tear up the constitution which she had signed! Those who dislike the autocratic power dislike the idea of an aristocratic oligarchy infinitely more. Nobles and people alike seem to hold instinctively the creed of the French philosopher who thought it better to be governed by a lion of good family than by a hundred rats of his own species.

CHAPTER XVIII.

SOCIAL CLASSES.

Do Social Classes or Castes exist in Russia?—Well-marked Social Types—Classes recognised by the Legislation and the Official Statistics—Origin and gradual Formation of these Classes—Peculiarity in the Historical Development of Russia—Political Life and Political Parties.

In the preceding pages I have repeatedly used the expression "Social Classes," and probably more than once the reader has felt inclined to ask, What are social classes in the Russian sense of the term? It may be well, therefore, before going further, to answer this question.

If the question were put to a Russian it is not at all unlikely that he would reply somewhat in this fashion: "In Russia there are no social classes, and there never have been any. That fact constitutes one of the most striking peculiarities of her historical development, and one of the surest foundations of her future greatness. We know nothing, and have never known anything, of those class-distinctions and class-enmities which in Western Europe have often rudely shaken society in past times, and imperil its existence in the future."

This statement will not be readily accepted by the traveller who visits Russia with no preconceived ideas and forms his opinions from his own observations. To him it seems that class-distinctions form one of the most prominent characteristics of Russian society. In

a few days he learns to distinguish the various classes by their outward appearance. He easily recognises the French-speaking nobles in West-European costume; the burly, bearded merchant in black cloth cap and long, shiny, double-breasted coat; the priest with his uncut hair and flowing robes; the peasant with his full, fair beard and unsavoury, greasy sheep-skin. Meeting everywhere those well-marked types, he naturally assumes that Russian society is composed of exclusive castes; and this first impression will be fully confirmed by a glance at the Code. Of the fifteen volumes which form the codified legislation, he finds that an entire volume—and by no means the smallest—is devoted to the rights and obligations of the various classes. From this he concludes that the classes have a legal as well as an actual existence. To make assurance doubly sure he turns to official statistics, and there he finds the following table :—

Hereditary nobles	652,887
Personal nobles	374,367
Clerical classes	695,905
Town classes	7,196,005
Rural classes	63,840,291
Military classes	4,767,703
Foreigners	153,135
	77,680,293 *

Armed with these materials, the traveller goes to his Russian friends who have assured him that their country

* Livron: "Statistitcheskoe Obozrênie Rossiiskoi Imperii," St. Petersburg, 1875. The above figures include the whole Empire.

knows nothing of class-distinctions. He is confident of being able to convince them that they have been labouring under a strange delusion, but he will be disappointed. They will tell him that these laws and statistics prove nothing, and that the categories therein mentioned are mere administrative fictions.

This apparent contradiction is to be explained by the equivocal meaning of the Russian terms "Sosloviya" and "Sostoyaniya," which are commonly translated "social classes." If by these terms are meant "castes" in the Oriental sense, then it may be confidently asserted that such do not exist in Russia. Between the nobles, the clergy, the burghers, and the peasants there are no distinctions of race and no impassable barriers. The peasant often becomes a merchant, and there are many cases on record of peasants and sons of parish priests becoming nobles. Until very recently the parish clergy composed, as we have seen, a peculiar and exclusive class, with many of the characteristics of a caste; but this has been changed, and it may now be said that in Russia there are no castes in the Oriental sense.

If the word Soslovié be taken to mean an organised political unit with an *esprit de corps* and a clearly-conceived political aim, it may likewise be admitted that there are none in Russia. As there has been for centuries no political life among the subjects of the Tsars, there have been no political parties.

On the other hand, however, to say that social classes have never existed in Russia and that the categories which appear in the legislation and in the official

statistics are mere administrative fictions, is a piece of gross exaggeration.

From the very beginning of Russian history we can detect unmistakably the existence of social classes, such as the princes, the Boyars, the armed followers of the princes, the peasantry, the slaves, and various others; and one of the oldest legal documents which we possess—the "Russian Right" (Rússkaya Pravda) of the Grand Prince Yaroslaff (1019—1054)—contains irrefragable proof, in the penalties attached to various crimes, that these classes were formally recognised by the legislation. Since that time they have frequently changed their character, but they have never at any period ceased to exist.

In ancient times, when there was very little administrative regulation, the classes had perhaps no clearly-defined boundaries, and the peculiarities which distinguished them from each other were actual rather than legal—lying in the mode of life and social position rather than in peculiar obligations and privileges. But as the autocratic power developed and strove to transform the nation into a State with a highly-centralised administration, the legal element in the social distinctions became more and more prominent. For financial and other purposes the people had to be divided into various categories. The existing actual distinctions were of course taken as the basis of the legal classification, but the classifying had more than a merely formal significance. The necessity of clearly defining the different groups entailed the

necessity of elevating and strengthening the barriers which already existed between them, and the difficulty of passing from one group to another was thereby increased. To take a concrete instance as an illustration: so long as there was no strict administrative supervision and regulation, a peasant might easily pass into the armed following of the prince, or an armed follower of the prince might become a simple peasant; but when the administrative regulation increased—especially when it became customary to tax persons instead of property—this passing from one class to another could not be allowed without restriction, for it might diminish the obligations which the individual had to fulfil. Even when there was no diminution, but merely a change, of obligations, it could not always be permitted, because the movement might assume serious dimensions, and thereby disturb the equilibrium between the various classes. So at least thought the Tsars, and they accordingly came to adopt the general principle that no one should leave the class in which he had been born. All this we have already seen illustrated in the history of the parish clergy.

In this work of classification Peter the Great especially distinguished himself. With his insatiable passion for regulation, he raised formidable barriers between the different categories, and defined the obligations of each with miscroscopic minuteness. After his death the work was carried on in the same spirit, and the tendency reached its climax in the reign of Nicholas, when the number of students to be

received in the universities was determined by Imperial ukaz!

It may seem strange to Englishmen that rulers should voluntarily take upon themselves the herculean task of regulating the relative numerical force of the different social classes, when it might be much better fulfilled by the principle of supply and demand, without legislative interference; but it must be remembered that the Russian Government has always placed more confidence in bureaucratic wisdom than in the instincts and common sense of the people.

In the reign of Catherine a new element was introduced into the official conception of social classes. Down to her time the Government had thought merely of class-obligations; under the influence of Western ideas she introduced the conception of class-rights. She wished, as we have seen, to have in her Empire a noblesse and a *tiers-état* like those which existed in France, and for this purpose she granted, first to the Dvoryánstvo and afterwards to the towns, an Imperial Charter, or Bill of Rights. Succeeding Sovereigns have acted in the same spirit, and the Code now confers on each class numerous privileges as well as numerous obligations.

Thus, we see, the oft-repeated assertion that the Russian social classes are simply artificial categories created by the legislation is to a certain extent true, but is by no means accurate. The social groups, such as peasants, landed proprietors, and the like, came into existence in Russia, as in other countries, by the

simple force of circumstances. The legislature merely recognised and developed the social distinctions which already existed. The legal status, obligations, and rights of each group were minutely defined and regulated, and legal barriers were added to the actual barriers which separated the groups from each other.

What is peculiar in the historical development of Russia is this: until lately she remained an almost exclusively agricultural Empire with abundance of unoccupied land. Her history presents, therefore, few of those conflicts which result from the variety of social conditions and the intensified struggle for existence. Certain social groups were, indeed, formed in the course of time, but they were never allowed to fight out their own battles. The irresistible autocratic power kept them always in check and fashioned them into whatever form it thought proper, defining minutely and carefully their obligations, their rights, their mutual relations, and their respective positions in the political organisation. Hence we find in the history of Russia almost no trace of those class-hatreds which appear so conspicuously in the history of Western Europe.*

The practical consequence of all this is that in Russia at the present day there is very little caste spirit or caste prejudice. We have already seen how the nobles and the recently-emancipated peasantry work amicably together in the Zemstvo, and many similar

* This is, I believe, the true explanation of an important fact, which the Slavophils endeavoured to explain by an ill-authenticated legend (*vide supra*, p. 281).

curious facts are to be met with in the history of the Emancipation. The confident anticipation of many Russians that their country will one day enjoy political life without political parties is, if not a contradiction in terms, at least a Utopian absurdity; but we may be sure that when political parties do appear they will be very different from those which exist in Germany, France, and England.

CHAPTER XIX.

AMONG THE HERETICS.

The Volga—Samara—The Molokáni—My Method of Investigation—Alexandrof-Haï—An Unexpected Theological Discussion—Doctrine and Ecclesiastical Organisation of the Molokáni—Moral Supervision and Mutual Assistance—History of the Sect—A False Prophet—Utilitarian Christianity—Classification of the Fantastic Sects—The Khlysti—Policy of the Government towards Sectarianism—Two Kinds of Heresy—Probable Future of the Heretical Sects—Political Disaffection.

THE Volga, as I have already said, is not on the whole a strikingly picturesque river. The country on the left bank is flat and marshy, and the right bank, though high and occasionally steep, is tame in outline and monotonous in colour. On both banks there is an abundance of trees, but they do not group themselves as a landscape-painter would desire, and do not remove the prevailing impression of bareness. If you have been duly warned not to expect much in the way of scenery, you may think, during the first hour or two on board the steamer, that the panorama, though tame, is pretty and pleasing; but when you have gazed on it for an entire day you come to regard it as intensely monotonous, and take refuge in reading, card-playing, or some other amusement.

There are, however, a few points on the Volga which are interesting enough to make you lay down your book or your cards, and among these points the first place must be given to the Zhiguli Hills, lying about half-

way between Kazán and Sarátof. They have a considerable local reputation, and I have heard a Frenchman enthusiastically describe them as "magnifiques." I do not think that an Englishman would venture to apply to them a stronger word than "pretty," but pretty they undoubtedly are. Though they are not high enough to obtain a place on ordinary maps, they are fine in form, and the left bank rises to do them honour, so that for a little time we have the sensation of passing through a hilly country. Then they gradually retreat from the river, and we see before us on the left bank a long straggling town, with one well-marked feature—a huge square church, with a bright green roof, surmounted by the ordinary pear-shaped cupolas. This is Samara, the chief town of the province or "Government" of that name.

Samara is a new town, a child of the present century, and recalls by its unfinished appearance the new towns of America. Most of the houses are of wood. The streets are still in such a primitive condition that after rain they are almost impassable from mud, and in dry, gusty weather they generate thick clouds of blinding, suffocating dust. Once during my stay there I witnessed a dust-hurricane, during which it was impossible at certain moments to see from the hotel window the houses on the other side of the street! Amidst such primitive surroundings the colossal new church seems a little out of keeping, and we involuntarily think, as we gaze at it, that some of the money expended on its construction might have been more profitably employed.

But the Russians have their own ideas of the fitness of things. They are, in all that regards externals, extremely religious, and subscribe money liberally for ecclesiastical purposes. Besides this, the Government considers that every chief town of a province should possess a cathedral.

In its early days Samara was one of the outposts of Russian colonisation, and had often to take precautions against the raids of the nomadic tribes living in its vicinity; but the agricultural frontier has since been pushed far forward to the east and south, and the province is now one of the most productive in the Empire. The town is the chief market of this region, and therein lies its importance. The grain is brought in by the peasants from great distances, and stored in large granaries by the wholesale merchants, who send it thence to Moscow and St. Petersburg by water and by rail. In former days this was a very tedious operation. The boats containing the grain were towed by horses or stout peasants up the rivers and along the canals for hundreds of miles. Then came the period of "cabestans"—unwieldy machines propelled by means of anchors and a windlass. Now the transport is effected in a much more expeditious way. The grain is put on board of gigantic barges, which are towed up the river by powerful tug-steamers to some point connected with the great network of railways.

When the traveller has visited the cathedral and the granaries he has seen all the lions—not very formidable lions, truly—of the place. He may then visit the two "koomuiss" establishments pleasantly situated near the

town. He will there find a considerable number of consumptive and other patients, who drink enormous quantities of fermented mares'-milk (koomuiss), and who declare that they derive great benefit from this new health-restorer. When I had done all this I felt that I had fulfilled the whole duty of a tourist, and set myself to my regular work, which consisted in collecting information regarding the economic condition of the province, and especially the condition of the emancipated peasantry.

Whilst engaged in this occupation I heard a great deal about a peculiar religious sect called the Molokáni, and I felt interested in them because their religious belief, whatever it was, seemed to have a beneficial influence on their material welfare. Of the same race and placed in the same conditions as the Orthodox peasantry around them, they were undoubtedly better housed, better clad, more punctual in the payment of their taxes, and, in a word, more prosperous. All my informants agreed in describing them as quiet, decent, sober people; but regarding their religious doctrines the evidence was vague and contradictory. Some described them as Protestants or Lutherans, whilst others believed them to be the last remnants of a curious heretical sect which existed in the early Christian Church. One gentleman ventured to assure me that their doctrine was a modified form of Manichæism, but I did not put much confidence in his opinion, for I found by questioning him that he knew of Manichæism nothing but the name.

Desirous of obtaining clear notions on the subject, I determined to investigate the matter for myself. At first I found this to be no easy task. I had little difficulty in making the acquaintance of a rich Molokán who lived in the town, and I so far gained his confidence that he promised me something that would serve as a letter of introduction to the leading members of the sect in the villages which I intended to visit; but on reflection he changed his mind, and failed to keep his promise. In the villages through which I passed I found numerous members of the sect, but they all showed a decided repugnance to speak about their religious beliefs. Long accustomed to extortion and persecution at the hands of the Administration, and suspecting me to be a secret agent of the Government, they carefully avoided speaking on any subject beyond the state of the weather and the prospects of the harvest, and replied to my questions on other topics as if they had been standing before a Grand Inquisitor.

A few unsuccessful attempts convinced me that it would be impossible to extract from them their religious beliefs by direct questioning. I adopted, therefore, a different line of policy. From meagre replies already received I had discovered that their doctrine had at least a superficial resemblance to Presbyterianism, and from former experience I was aware that the curiosity of intelligent Russian peasants is easily excited by descriptions of foreign countries. These two facts I took as the basis of my strategy. When I found a Molokán, or some one whom I suspected to be such, I talked for some

time about the weather and the crops as if I had no ulterior object in view. Having fully discussed this matter, I led the conversation gradually from the weather and crops in Russia to the weather and crops in Scotland, and then passed slowly from Scotch agriculture to the Scotch Presbyterian Church. On nearly every occasion this policy succeeded. When the peasant heard that there is a country where the people interpret the Scriptures for themselves, have no bishops, and consider the veneration of Icons as idolatry, he invariably listened with profound attention; and when he learned further that in that wonderful country the parishes annually send deputies to an assembly in which all matters pertaining to the Church are freely and publicly discussed, he almost always gave free expression to his astonishment, and I had to answer a whole volley of questions. "Where is that country?" "Is it to the east, or the west?" "Is it very far away?" "If our Presbyter could only hear all that!"

This last expression was precisely what I wanted, because it gave me an opportunity of making the acquaintance of the Presbyter or pastor without seeming to desire it; and I knew that a conversation with that personage, who is always an uneducated peasant like the others but is generally more intelligent and better acquainted with religious doctrine, would certainly be of use to me. On more than one occasion I spent a great part of the night with a Presbyter, and thereby learned much concerning the religious beliefs and practices of the sect. After these interviews I was sure to be treated

with confidence and respect by all the Molokáns in the village, and recommended to the brethren of the faith in the neighbouring villages through which I intended to pass. Several of the more intelligent peasants with whom I spoke advised me strongly to visit Alexandrof-Haï, a village situated on the borders of the Kirghis Steppe. "We are dark (*i.e.*, ignorant) people here," they were wont to say, "and do not know anything, but in Alexandrof-Haï you will find those who know the faith, and they will discuss with you." This prediction was fulfilled in a somewhat unexpected way.

When returning some weeks later from a visit to the Kirghis of the Inner Horde, I arrived one evening at this centre of the Molokán faith, and was hospitably received by one of the brotherhood. In conversing casually with my host on religious subjects I expressed to him a desire to find some one well read in Holy Writ and well grounded in the faith, and he promised to do what he could for me in this respect. Next morning he kept his promise with a vengeance. Immediately after the tea-urn had been removed, the door of the room was opened, and twelve peasants were ushered in! After the customary salutations with these unexpected visitors, my host informed me to my astonishment that his friends had come to have a talk with me about the faith; and without further ceremony he placed before me a folio Bible in the Slavonic tongue, in order that I might read passages in support of my arguments. As I was not at all prepared to open a formal theological discussion, I felt not a little embarrassed by this procedure, and I

could see that my travelling companions, two Russian friends who cared for none of these things, were thoroughly enjoying my discomfiture. There was, however, no possibility of drawing back. I had asked for an opportunity of having a talk with some of the brethren, and now I had got it in a way that I certainly did not expect. My friends withdrew—"leaving me to my fate," as they whispered to me—and the "talk" began.

My fate was by no means so terrible as had been anticipated, but at first the situation was a little awkward. Neither party had any clear ideas as to what the other desired, and my visitors expected that I was to begin the proceedings. This expectation was quite natural and justifiable, for I had inadvertently invited them to meet me, but I could not make a speech to them, for the best of all reasons—that I did not know what to say. If I told them my real aims, their suspicions would probably be aroused. My usual stratagem of the weather and the crops was wholly inapplicable. For a moment I thought of proposing that a psalm should be sung as a means of breaking the ice, but I felt that this would give to the meeting a solemnity which I wished to avoid. On the whole it seemed best to begin at once a formal discussion. I told them, therefore, that I had spoken with many of their brethren in various villages, and that I had found what I considered grave errors of doctrine. I could not, for instance, agree with them in their belief that it was unlawful to eat pork. This was perhaps an abrupt way of entering on the subject, but it furnished

at least a *locus standi*—something to talk about—and an animated discussion immediately ensued. My opponents first endeavoured to prove their thesis from the New Testament, and when this argument broke down they had recourse to the Pentateuch. From a particular article of the ceremonial law we passed to the broader question as to how far the ceremonial law is still binding, and from this to other points equally important. If the logic of the peasants was not always unimpeachable, their knowledge of the Scriptures left nothing to be desired. In support of their views they quoted long passages from memory, and whenever I indicated vaguely any text which I needed, they at once supplied it verbatim, so that the big folio Bible served merely as an ornament. Three or four of them seemed to know the whole of the New Testament by heart. The course of our informal debate need not here be described; suffice it to say that, after four hours of uninterrupted conversation, we agreed to differ on questions of detail, and parted from each other without a trace of that ill-feeling which religious discussion commonly engenders. Never have I met men more honest and courteous in debate, more earnest in the search after truth, and more careless of dialectical triumphs than these simple, uneducated peasants. If at one or two points in the discussion a little undue warmth was displayed, I must do my opponents the justice to say that they were not the offending party.

This long discussion, as well as numerous discussions which I had before and since with Presbyters and simple members in various parts of the country, confirmed my

first impression that the doctrines of the Molokáni have a strong resemblance to Presbyterianism. There is, however, an important difference. Presbyterianism has an ecclesiastical organisation and a written creed, and its doctrines have long since become clearly defined by means of public discussion, polemical literature, and general assemblies. The Molokáni, on the contrary, have had no means of developing their fundamental principles and forming their vague religious beliefs into a clearly-defined logical system. Their theology is, therefore, still in a half-fluid state, so that it is impossible to predict what form it will ultimately assume. "We have not yet thought about that," I have frequently been told when I inquired about some abstruse doctrine; "we must talk about it at the meeting next Sunday. What is your opinion?" Besides this, their fundamental principles allow great latitude for individual and local differences of opinion. They hold that Holy Writ is the only rule of faith and conduct, but that it must be taken in the spiritual, and not in the literal, sense. As there is no terrestrial authority to which doubtful points can be referred, each individual is free to adopt the interpretation which commends itself to his own judgment. This will no doubt ultimately lead to a variety of sects, and already there is a considerable diversity of opinion between different communities; but this diversity has not yet been recognised, and I may say that I nowhere found that fanatically dogmatic, quibbling spirit, which is the soul of sectarianism.

For their ecclesiastical organisation the Molokáni

take as their model the early Apostolic Church, as depicted in the New Testament, and uncompromisingly reject all later authorities. In accordance with this model they have no hierarchy and no paid clergy, but choose from among themselves a Presbyter and two assistants—men well known among the brethren for their exemplary life and their knowledge of the Scriptures—whose duty it is to watch over the religious and moral welfare of the flock. On Sundays they hold meetings in private houses—they are not allowed to build churches—and spend two or three hours in psalm-singing, prayer, reading the Scriptures, and friendly conversation on religious subjects. If any one has a doctrinal difficulty which he desires to have cleared up, he states it to the congregation, and some of the others give their opinions, with the texts on which the opinions are founded. If the question seems clearly solved by the texts, it is decided; if not, it is left open.

As in many young sects, there exists among the Molokáni a system of severe moral supervision. If a member has been guilty of drunkenness or any act unbecoming a Christian, he is first admonished by the Presbyter in private or before the congregation; and if this does not produce the desired effect, he is excluded for a longer or shorter period from the meetings and from all intercourse with the members. In extreme cases expulsion is resorted to. On the other hand, if any one of the members happens to be, from no fault of his own, in pecuniary difficulties, the others will assist him. This system of mutual control and mutual assist-

ance has no doubt something to do with the fact that the Molokáni are always distinguished from the surrounding population by their sobriety, uprightness, and material prosperity.

Of the history and actual strength of the Molokán sect very little is known. Some believe that it was founded by foreign Protestants in the sixteenth century, but they can produce nothing better than vague traditions in support of their opinion. The oldest documentary evidence regarding it is, so far as I am aware, an official paper of the time of Catherine II. As to its actual strength it is difficult to form even a conjecture. Certainly it has many thousand members—probably several hundred thousands. Formerly the Government transported them from the central provinces to the thinly-populated outlying districts, where they had less opportunity of contaminating Orthodox neighbours; and accordingly we find them in the south-eastern districts of Samára, on the north coast of the Sea of Azof, in the Crimea, in the Caucasus, and in Siberia. There are still, however, very many of them in the central region, especially in the province of Tambóf.

The readiness with which the Molokáni modify their opinions and beliefs in accordance with what seems to them new light, saves them effectually from bigotry and fanaticism, but it at the same time exposes them to evils of a different kind, from which they might be preserved by a few stubborn prejudices. "False prophets arise among us," said an old, sober-minded member to me on one occasion, "and lead many away from the faith."

Of these false prophets the most remarkable in recent times was a man who called himself Ivan Grigorief, a mysterious personage, who had at one time a Turkish and at another an American passport, but who seemed in all other respects a genuine Russian. Some years ago he appeared at Alexandrof-Haï. Though he professed himself to be a good Molokán and was received as such, he enounced at the weekly meetings many new and startling ideas. At first he simply urged his hearers to live like the early Christians, and have all things in common. This seemed sound doctrine to the Molokáni, who profess to take the early Christians as their model, and some of them thought of at once abolishing personal property; but when the teacher intimated pretty plainly that this communism should include free love, a decided opposition arose, and it was objected that the early Church did not recommend wholesale adultery and cognate sins. This was a formidable objection, but "the prophet" was equal to the occasion. He reminded his friends that in accordance with their own doctrine the Scriptures should be understood, not in the literal, but in the spiritual, sense—that Christianity had made men free, and every true Christian ought to use his freedom. "All things are lawful, but all things are not expedient" —that is to say, we ought to be guided in our acts simply by expediency, and all objections to a project on the ground of its being unlawful must fall to the ground. He who allows himself to be restrained by law is no true Christian.

This account of the new doctrine was given to me by

an intelligent Molokán, who had formerly been a peasan and was now a trader, as I sat one evening in his house in Novo-usensk, the chief town of the district in which Alexandrof-Haï is situated. It seemed to me that the author of this ingenious attempt to conciliate Christianity with extreme Utilitarianism must be an educated man in disguise. This conviction I communicated to my host, but he did not agree with me.

"No, I think not," he replied; "in fact, I am sure he is a peasant, and I strongly suspect he was at some time a soldier. He has not much learning, but he has a wonderful gift of talking. Never have I heard any one speak like him. He would have talked over the whole village, had it not been for an old man who was more than a match for him. And then he went to Orloff-Haï, and there he did talk the people over." What he really did in this latter place I never could clearly ascertain. Report said that he founded a communistic association, of which he was himself president and treasurer, and converted the members to an extraordinary theory of prophetic succession, invented apparently for his own sensual gratification. For further information my host advised me to apply either to the prophet himself, who was at that time confined in the gaol on a charge of using a forged passport, or to one of his friends, a certain Mr. I——, who lived in the town. As it was a difficult matter to gain admittance to the prisoner, and I had little time at my disposal, I adopted the latter alternative.

Mr. I—— was himself a somewhat curious character.

He had been a student in Moscow, and in consequence of some youthful indiscretions during the University disturbances, of which I have already spoken, had been exiled to this place. After waiting in vain some years for a release, he gave up the idea of entering one of the learned professions, married a peasant-girl, rented a piece of land, bought a pair of camels, and settled down as a small farmer.* He had a great deal to tell about the prophet.

Ivan Grigorief, it seemed, was really a simple Russian peasant, but he had been from his youth upwards one of those restless people who can never long work in harness. Where his native place was, and why he left it, he never divulged, for reasons best known to himself. He had travelled much, and had been an attentive observer. Whether he had ever been in America was doubtful, but he had certainly been in Turkey, and had fraternised with various Russian sectarians, who are to be found in considerable numbers near the Danube. Here, probably, he acquired many of his peculiar religious ideas, and conceived his grand scheme of founding a new religion—of rivalling the Founder of Christianity! He aimed at nothing less than this, as he on one occasion confessed, and he did not see why he should not be successful. He believed that the Founder of Christianity had been simply a man like himself, who understood better than others the people

* Here for the first time I saw camels used for agricultural purposes. When yoked to a small four-wheeled cart, the "ships of the desert" seemed decidedly out of place.

around him and the circumstances of the time, and he was convinced that he himself had these qualifications. One qualification, however, for becoming a prophet he certainly did not possess: he had no genuine religious enthusiasm in him—nothing of the martyr spirit about him. Much of his own preaching he did not himself believe, and he seemed to have a certain contempt for those who naïvely accepted it all. Not only was he cunning, but he knew he was cunning, and he was conscious that he was playing an assumed part. And yet perhaps it would be unjust to say that he was merely an impostor exclusively occupied with his own personal advantage. Though he was naturally a man of sensual tastes, and could not resist convenient opportunities of gratifying them, he seemed to believe that his communistic schemes would, if realised, be beneficial not only to himself, but also to the people. Altogether a curious mixture of the prophet, the social reformer, and the cunning impostor! Whether he may ever again set up as prophet it is impossible to say, but certainly he has no chance of again succeeding among the Molokáni of the province of Samara.

Besides the Molokáni, there are in Russia many other heretical sects. Some of them are simply evangelical Protestants, like the "Stundisti," who have adopted the religious conceptions of their neighbours, the German colonists, whilst others are composed of wild enthusiasts, who give a loose rein to their excited imagination, and revel in what the Germans aptly term "der höhere Blödsinn." I cannot here attempt to convey even a

general idea of these fantastic sects with their doctrinal and ceremonial absurdities, but I may offer the following classification of them for the benefit of those who may desire to study the subject:—

1. Sects which take the Scriptures as the basis of their belief, but interpret and complete the doctrines therein contained by means of the occasional inspiration or internal enlightenment of their leading members.

2. Sects which pay little or no attention to Scripture, and derive their doctrine from the supposed inspiration of their living teachers.

3. Sects which believe in the re-incarnation of Christ.

4. Sects which confound religion with nervous excitement, and are more or less erotic in their character. The excitement necessary for prophesying is commonly produced by dancing, jumping, pirouetting, or self-castigation, and the absurdities spoken at such times are regarded as the direct expression of divine wisdom. The religious exercises resemble more or less closely those of the "Dancing Dervishes," with which all who have visited Constantinople are familiar. There is, however, one important difference: the Dervishes practise their religious exercises in public, and consequently observe a certain decorum, whilst these Russian sects assemble in secret, and give free scope to their excitement, so that most disgusting orgies sometimes take place at their meetings. In one of the best known of these sects—the Skoptsi, or Eunuchs—fanaticism has led to physical mutilation.

To illustrate the general character of the sects

belonging to this last category, I may quote here a short extract from a description of the "Khlysti" by one who was initiated into their mysteries:—"Among them men and women alike take upon themselves the calling of teachers and prophets, and in this character they lead a strict, ascetic life, refrain from the most ordinary and innocent pleasures, exhaust themselves by long fasting and wild, ecstatic religious exercises, and abhor marriage. Under the excitement caused by their supposed holiness and inspiration, they call themselves not only teachers and prophets, but also 'Saviours,' 'Redeemers,' 'Christs,' 'Mothers of God.' Generally speaking, they call themselves simply Gods, and pray to each other as to real Gods and living Christs or Madonnas. When several of these teachers come together at a meeting, they dispute with each other in a vain, boasting way as to which of them possesses most grace and power. In this rivalry they sometimes give each other lusty blows on the ear, and he who bears the blows most patiently, turning the other cheek to the assailant, acquires the reputation of having most holiness."

Another sect belonging to this category is the Jumpers, among whom the erotic element is disagreeably prominent. Here is a description of their religious meetings, which are held during summer in the forest, and during winter in some outlying house or barn:—"After due preparation prayers are read by the chief teacher, dressed in a white robe and standing in the midst of the congregation. At first he reads in an

ordinary tone of voice, and then passes gradually into a merry chant. When he remarks that the chanting has sufficiently acted on the hearers, he begins to jump. The hearers, singing likewise, follow his example. Their ever-increasing excitement finds expression in the highest possible jumps. This they continue as long as possible—men and women alike yelling like enraged savages. When all are thoroughly exhausted, the leader declares that he hears the angels singing"—and here begins a scene which cannot be here described. Indeed, it may be remarked in general that in many of the sects the erotic element plays such a prominent part, that it is impossible to describe their ceremonies in a work intended for the general public.

It is but fair to add that we know very little of these peculiar sects, and what we do know is furnished by professed enemies. It is very possible, therefore, that some of them are not nearly so absurd as they are commonly represented, and that many of the stories told are mere calumnies. Certain sects, for instance, are accused of killing children and using the blood of the victim for sacramental purposes; but this has never been satisfactorily proved, and we know that the same accusation was made by pagan writers against the early Christians. My own efforts to investigate in this field by personal observation were, I must confess, entirely fruitless.

The Government is very hostile to sectarianism, and occasionally endeavours to suppress it. This is natural enough as regards these fantastic sects, but it seems

strange that the peaceful, industrious, honest Molokáni and Stundisti should be put under the ban. Why is it that a Russian peasant should be punished for holding doctrines which are openly professed with the sanction of the authorities by his neighbours, the German colonists?

To understand this the reader must know that according to Russian conceptions there are two distinct kinds of heresy, distinguished from each other, not by the doctrines held, but by the nationality of the holder. It seems to a Russian in the nature of things that Tartars should be Mahometans, that Poles should be Roman Catholics, and that Germans should be Protestants; and the mere act of becoming a Russian subject is not supposed to lay the Tartar, the Pole, or the German under any obligation to change his faith. These nationalities are therefore allowed the most perfect freedom in the exercise of their respective religions, so long as they refrain from disturbing by propagandism the divinely-established order of things. This is the received theory, and we must do the Russians the justice to say that they habitually act up to it. If the Government has sometimes attempted to convert alien races, the motive has always been political, and the efforts have never awakened much sympathy among the people at large, or even among the clergy. In like manner the missionary societies which have sometimes been formed in imitation of the Western nations have never received much popular support. Thus with regard to aliens this peculiar theory has led to very extensive religious tole-

ration. Tartars, Poles, and Germans are in a certain sense heretics, but their heresy is natural and justifiable. With regard to the Russians themselves the theory has had a very different effect. If in the nature of things the Tartar is a Mahometan, the Pole a Roman Catholic, and the German a Protestant, it is equally in the nature of things that the Russian should be a member of the Orthodox Church. On this point the written law and public opinion are in perfect accord. If an Orthodox Russian becomes a Roman Catholic or a Protestant, his heresy is not of the same kind as that of the Pole or the German. No matter how pure and elevated his motives may be, his change of religion is not justifiable; on the contrary, he is amenable to the criminal law, and is at the same time condemned by public opinion as an apostate—almost as a traitor.

As to the future of these heretical sects it is impossible to speak with confidence. The more gross and fantastic will probably disappear as primary education spreads among the people, but the Protestant sects seem to possess much more vitality. For the present, at least, they are rapidly spreading. I have seen large villages where, according to the testimony of the inhabitants, there was not a single heretic fifteen years ago, and where now one-half of the population are Molokáni; and this change has taken place without any propagandist organisation. The civil and ecclesiastical authorities are well aware of the existence of the movement, but they are powerless to prevent it. The few efforts which they have made have been without effect, or worse than useless. Among

the Stundisti corporal punishment has been tried as an antidote—without the concurrence, it is to be hoped, of the central authorities—and to the Molokáni of the province of Samára a learned monk was sent in the hope of converting them from their errors by reason and eloquence. What effect the birch-twigs had on the religious convictions of the Stundisti I have not been able to ascertain, but I assume that they were not very efficacious, for according to the latest accounts the numbers of the sect are increasing. Of the mission in the province of Samára I happen to know more, and can state on the evidence of many peasants—some of them Orthodox—that the only immediate effect was to stir up religious fanaticism, and to induce a certain number of Orthodox to go over to the heretical camp. In the public discussions the disputants could find no common ground on which to argue, for the simple reason that their fundamental conceptions were different. The monk spoke of the Church as the terrestrial representative of Christ and the sole possessor of truth, whilst his opponents knew nothing of a Church in this sense, and held simply that all men should live in accordance with the dictates of Scripture. Once the monk consented to argue with them on their own ground, but on that occasion he sustained a signal defeat, for he could not produce a single passage recommending the veneration of Icons—a practice which the Russian peasants consider an essential part of Orthodoxy. After this he always insisted on the authority of the early Ecumenical Councils and the Fathers of the Church—an authority

which his antagonists did not recognise. Altogether the mission was a complete failure, and all parties regretted that it had been undertaken. "It was a great mistake," remarked to me confidentially an Orthodox peasant—"a very great mistake! The Molokáni are a cunning people. The monk was no match for them; they knew the Scriptures a great deal better than he did. The Church should not condescend to discuss with heretics."

It is often said that these heretical sects are politically disaffected, and the Molokáni are thought to be specially dangerous in this respect. Perhaps there is a certain foundation for this opinion, for men are naturally disposed to doubt the legitimacy of a power that systematically persecutes them; but it may be confidently affirmed that any fanaticism of this kind which may have formerly existed has lost its significance now that active persecution is no longer in fashion. With regard to the Molokáni I believe the accusation to be a groundless calumny. Political ideas seem entirely foreign to their modes of thought. During my intercourse with them I have often heard them speak of the police as "wolves which have to be fed," but I have never heard them speak of the Emperor otherwise than in terms o filial affection and veneration.

END OF VOL. I.

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